THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE AND CURRENT RACIAL IDENTITIES THROUGHOUT U.S. SOCIETY — THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY

SUMMARY:

The full collection of Racial Literacy Grade 6 lessons builds upon the Grade 5 unit, which introduces the history of immigration in the United States. Grade 6 lessons aim to create a more nuanced, eclectic conceptualization of race. The unit begins with Chimamanda Adichie's idea of the "Danger of a Single Story," which highlights the importance of considering multiple perspectives when categorizing people. Subsequent lessons will create a historical timeline, mapping the social construction of "race" by providing a brief overview of the treatment and conceptualization of various racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. In an effort to provide a humanistic lens, such lessons also include current and literary voices of people who identify as a particular racial group: Native American, Black American, White American, Latinx American, Asian American, as well as "Other" American voices. The unit aims for a balanced "both/and" approach — one that faces both the unpleasant social and historical truths and acknowledges the humanity of individuals and groups of people, such as those who dared to love and embrace their cultures and identities while living in a society that's plagued with violence and efforts of dehumanization. As an interviewee in one of the lessons states, "Existence is resistance." How have such marginalized voices survived, and dared to thrive? While various perspectives are considered, the curriculum cannot represent all groups of peoples and all stories. Yet, as a whole, the unit provides many voices, so students realize that no group is monolithic, nor is any group inferior or superior. For a final lesson, students will begin to tell their own story. Please read through all lessons in Grade 5 and 6 before launching the unit.

GRADE 6 LESSONS BY TOPIC:

1. The Danger of a Single Story
2. Native American Voices: The Past Informs the Present
3. Black American Voices: The Past Informs the Present
4. White American Voices: The Past Informs the Present
5. Latinx American Voices: The Past Informs the Present
6. Asian American Voices: The Past Informs the Present
7. "Other" American Voices: Multiracial People and Finding Ourselves in the "Other"
8. The Story of Our Own Identities

LESSON 1
THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY

Grade: 6 | Suggested Time: 45-60 minutes
Unit: The Historical Construction of Race and Current Racial Identities Throughout U.S. Society – The Danger of a Single Story
Related Subject(s): English/Language Arts; Social Studies

Background

OBJECTIVES
- To explore aspects of identity, including the various ways students identify.
- To explore the "dangers of a single story."
- To reflect on how they see others and themselves.
- To understand the importance of diversity, or having multiple windows and mirrors.
- To deconstruct and reconstruct ideas about identity.

MATERIALS
- "The Danger of a Single Story," TED-Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Available here: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story
- To enhance teacher understanding on the importance of student identity and having representation in the curriculum, consider reading Emily Style's essay, "Curriculum as Window and Mirror." Available here: https://nationalseedproject.org/images/documents/Curriculum_As_Window_and_Mirror.pdf
- To enhance teacher understanding about the importance of the intersectionality of identity, consider watching the following two-minute video of Kimberlé Crenshaw, "What is Intersectionality," Available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViDtnfQ9FHc
- To learn more about Kimberlé Crenshaw's work, the teacher may consider reading her trailblazing paper, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination, Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." Available here: https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https redir=1&article=1052&context=uclf

ESSENTIAL IDEA
- What is identity? Why is it important to consider many viewpoints when speaking about identity? What kinds of ideas or categories inform our identities?
- In this lesson, students will unpack the idea presented in Chimamanda Adichie's TED-Talk, the "Danger of a Single Story?" What does Adichie mean when she says that phrase? Why is it important that we have multiple viewpoints to consider? As Adichie references in her talk, what are the "benefits" of having what Chinua Achebe calls a "balance of stories?" How can listening be an empowering act? Similarly, how can speaking be an empowering act?

VOCABULARY
- Consider reviewing the following terms and/or ideas for this lesson: identity, intersectionality, "danger of a single story," windows and mirrors, etc.
- For the rest of this unit, as included in Grade 5, consider the following definition of "ethnicity" from *Britannica Kids*:
  - **Ethnicity**: "The term ethnicity may be used to describe the cultural background of a person. An ethnic group is made up of people who share the same ethnicity." While ethnicity is often used in reference to race, some applications of the term ethnicity are more connected to a societal group, often rooted in religious, cultural, and/or linguistic affiliation. Using the term ethnicity can often include nationality and culture, and sometimes envelop the social idea of race.
- Consider the following definition of "race," as defined in Merriam-Webster:
  - **Race**: "a category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits." Remind students that the concept of race is not biologically true, but there is a social reality to race, especially in the United States.

Lesson Procedure

BACKGROUND

- In her essay, "Curriculum as Window and Mirror," Emily Style writes, "no student acquires knowledge in the abstract; learning is always personal. Furthermore, learning never takes place in a vacuum; it is always contextual." Style speaks to the idea of providing both "windows and mirrors" in the classroom curriculum, so students both look through other viewpoints and see themselves reflected in texts, visuals, and dialogue. She writes: "If the student is understood as occupying a dwelling of self, education needs to enable the student to look through window frames in order to see the realities of others and into mirrors in order to see her/his own reality reflected. Knowledge of both types of framing is basic to a balanced education, which is committed to affirming the essential dialectic between the self and the world. In other words, education engages us in 'the great conversation' between various frames of reference."
- To provide students with perhaps a window and/or mirror to begin viewing themselves, we recommend an exploration of Chimamanda Adichie's idea of "the danger of a single story." In her TED-Talk "The Danger of a Single Story," Chimamanda Adichie speaks to both the danger of having a limited story of a particular individual and/or racial/ethnic group, and the importance of providing multiple perspectives so that we don't have myopic or limited views of others, and ourselves. A native of Nigeria, Chimamanda Adichie — who grew up to become a novelist — speaks about the lack of representation of the literature she had access to, as she shares, "Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify. Now, things changed when I discovered African books." This lesson will ask students to consider the power of representation, and the long-lasting impact having various windows and mirrors may have on our lives, both in and beyond the classroom.

OPENING

- Tell students that today's lesson will introduce concepts regarding identity. Consider establishing guidelines before beginning discussions, such as words that are considered "appropriate" for the classroom, and other guidelines that the teacher feels are necessary for the class to construct a safer space for dialogue.
- Begin by asking students to reflect on the idea of identity. What do we mean when we say that word? Consider defining it. For a foundation, consider a definition offered by Merriam-Webster, which describes identity as: "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual." Do we agree with this? Can we revise this somehow to better fit our ideas?
- Once the class has mostly agreed upon a common understanding for identity, ask the class to think about their own identity. If they had to define themselves, or share their story with someone else, what would they say? How would they describe themselves? What parts of their identity do they think matter most, or best describe them?
- To encourage students to think about intersectionality, consider asking them to silently reflect on various aspects of their identities, such as race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality or sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, beliefs and/or traditions (i.e. religious identities, if they have them), nationality, ability, etc. Ask them to consider cultural elements that may not have readily available labels, such as languages they speak, the foods they eat, their names, etc.
- Consider distributing a graphic organizer, such as a "web," or even blank sheets of paper. In the center, students can draw a circle. From that circle, stems may radiate. In the center of the circle, students may write their name. Ask them to write down, along the stems, different ways they would identify themselves and/or the traits or characteristics that matter to them, or "tell their story." The teacher may provide a model, such as their own identity page. For example, a person may identify as "Black, straight, a daughter, a New Yorker, someone who doesn't eat meat, Jewish, etc." Encourage sociological identity markers and ideas that go beyond that. Give students a few minutes to write, encouraging them to jot down as many ideas as they can.
- For some people, "Who Am I?" may be a challenging question to think about. To unpack this, students may first consider a more "surface" version of who they are, or the ideas they think others may have of them upon first glance. Students may then think about parts of their identity others can't perceive immediately by looking at them. Encourage students to think about their physical and social identities, as well as their personality and inner world.

GUIDED PRACTICE

- Segue into a discussion of a "single story." While there may be aspects of our identity that we connect with (or even distance ourselves from), is there a single word, a single sentence, or a single story from your life that completely defines you? Even if one word does not suffice, sometimes when people view or consider us, that may be what they see. Is it okay for others to have a limited view of us? On that note, do we also have limited views of other people? In short, do we sometimes have a "single story" for others, the way others may have a "single story" about us?
- Introduce Chimamanda Adichie, a novelist who was born in and spent her childhood in Nigeria. Ask the class if they have heard of her before. Tell them that they are going to learn more about an intriguing idea, which Adichie has coined as the "danger of a single story." Before watching, please frame expectations so students know they will talk about something sophisticated and mature today. (In the video, Adichie addresses concepts like stereotypes, and references mature topics. While we recommend the video for a sixth grade audience, we also recommend, as always, that the teacher pre-screens the video to assess if it is appropriate for their particular classroom community.)
- Show "The Danger of a Single Story." After viewing the TED-Talk, have a class discussion. Consider asking the class: What does Adichie mean when she says the "danger of a single story." How does having a single story of others diminish human connection? How does it reduce people? What does the single story rob people of? What does the single story emphasize? What was the "unintended consequence" of Adichie not having access to books that reflected her identity? Describe the impact that discovering African writers had on Adichie's life. Why do stories matter? What is the impact of having what Chinua Achebe calls "a balance of stories." What do we gain when we reject a single story?

INDEPENDENT AND/OR GROUP WORK

- Either independently or in small groups, ask students to choose a quote that resonated with them. For example, they may choose a quote and describe what they think Adichie means by that particular statement, or share how the quote relates to their own life experience, or state whether or not they agree with Adichie, etc. If working in small groups, students may speak about the prompt. If working independently, students may write a reflection for a chosen prompt.
- Consider the following quotes from Adichie's TED-Talk to serve as prompts for the students to respond to: 1) "Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story." 2) "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." 3) "The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar." 4) "Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity." 5) "When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise."
- If students would like to choose a quote of their own, they may rewatch clips and/or read through the transcript, which is available on the same site as the video.

CLOSING

- Revisit the idea of identity. According to professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Identity isn't simply a self-contained unit. It is a relationship between people and history, people and communities, people and institutions.
- Now that we've discussed the dangers of having a single story for others, and possibly for ourselves, would we add anything to our concept of identity? Would we add anything to the identity pages we made for ourselves? If so, consider giving students time to add to their page, and encourage them to tuck their papers away in a safe place, as they will revisit them for a culminating lesson.
- Remind students that telling our stories can be a challenging experience, but it is also important. The world is going to demand this of us. Yet, there is a beauty to our uniqueness. It's important to develop a sense of pride, especially in regard to our identities. By the end of this unit, we will circle back to our stories. For the upcoming series of lessons, we will hear the stories of others, hopefully, hearing and/or inspiring pieces of ourselves along the way.

Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- For another lesson about identity — including the intersectionality of identity, and how we see ourselves and how we believe others may view us — consider the work of Jesús Colón. A self-identified Puerto Rican writer, and often considered a leader of the "Nuyorican Movement," Jesús Colón penned a piece titled, "Little Things Are Big." In this personal essay, Colón grapples with the idea of helping a young White woman on the train, who was alone with a baby, a suitcase, and two other younger children. It was after midnight, on the subway. Extending "courtesy" to this person seemed like a natural or even obvious idea to Colón, yet he didn't help her. He hesitated, thinking that a Black Puerto Rican man approaching a White woman in that situation may be interpreted differently than he intended. In his words, he feared she might be "prejudiced" against him. In a personal reflection, Colón grapples with this idea after it happened: "Perhaps the lady was not prejudiced after all. If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you lady. I failed your two children. I failed myself." Why would Colón harbor these ideas? What role do stereotypes play in our ability and inability to help others? What are the dangers of having a single story of others, and even for ourselves? A narrated video of Colón's "personal essay" is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLTEZVmJ6-E

LESSON 2

NATIVE AMERICAN VOICES — THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

Grade: 6 | Suggested Time: Three Class Periods
Unit: The Historical Construction of Race and Current Racial Identities Throughout U.S. Society – The Danger of a Single Story
Related Subject(s): English/Language Arts; Social Studies/History

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that Native Americans are are not a monolithic, racial/ethnic community.
- To understand that the term "Native American" encompasses a diverse group of Indigenous peoples and cultures that span from North to South America.
- To reject the idea of a "single story" for Native Americans.
- To learn more about the historical events that impacted and created a shared Native American identity, while also recognizing differences.
- To listen to self-identified Native Americans speak about their life experiences.
- To read a collection of poems, written by self-identified Native Americans, which encompasses a multitude of themes.

MATERIALS FOR PART 1

- Excerpts from *A Different Mirror for Young People* by Ronald Takaki adapted by Rebecca Stefoff, Chapter 2, "Removing the 'Savages,'" Chapter 4, "The Road to Reservation," and Chapter 9, "Dealing with the Indians."
- For an additional resource, consider reading, "Native American History Timeline," which includes brief descriptions of historical events and a photo gallery on History.com. Available here: https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/native-american-timeline
- Also, consider reading, "Indian Reservations," article on History.com. Available here: https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/indian-reservations
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 2

- "A Conversation with Native Americans on Race," video and brief article by Michèle Stephenson and Brian Young for *The New York Times*. Available here: https://nyti.ms/2uZeW53
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 3

- Consider the following poems, written by Native American authors. While we recommend these poems for a sixth grade classroom, as always, please pre-screen any and all resources before using them to ensure they are appropriate for your particular classroom:
  - "From 'Bestiary,'" poem by Sherman Alexie. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/56424/from-bestiary
  - "The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee," poem by N. Scott Momaday. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46558/the-delight-song-of-tsoai-talee
  - "Haiku Journey," poem by Kimberly Blaeser. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53907/haiku-journey
  - "Dakota Homecoming," poem by Gwen Nell Westerman. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/147040/dakota-homecoming
  - "Before Moving on to Plymouth from Cape Cod – 1620," poem by Cheryl Savageau. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53920/before-moving-on-to-plymouth-from-cape-cod-1620

- "Death," poem by Crisosto Apache. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/146697/death-5af07ffbea7c4
- "Elegy for My Younger Sister," poem by Luci Tapahonso. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/147194/elegy-for-my-younger-sister
- "Prints," poem by Joseph Bruchac. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57810/prints
- "Combing," poem by Gladys Cardiff. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53170/combing
- "Passive Voice," poem by Laura Da'. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/147039/passive-voice
- "Indian Chant," poem by Diane Glancy. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50884/indian-chant
- "Epithalamia," poem by Joan Kane. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/58652/epithalamia
- "Marshlands," poem by Emily Pauline Johnson. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52095/marshlands
- "Flood," poem by Janet McAdams. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=37528
- "Invisible Fish," poem by Joy Harjo. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/101674/invisible-fish-swim-this-ghost-ocean
- "Endangered Species," poem by Phillip Carroll Morgan. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53904/endangered-species-56d233a6624c8
- "Almost Ashore," poem by Gerald Vizenor. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53928/almost-ashore
- "Reflection," poem by Mark Turcotte. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=40866
- "Innocence," poem by Linda Hogan. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57907/innocence-56d23bd375f1a
- "Anasazi," poem by Tacey M. Atsitty. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/147316/anasazi
- "The Storm," poem by Nora Marks Dauenhauer. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53443/the-storm-56d232bbacb46
- "Grandmother Eliza," poem by Nora Marks Dauenhauer. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53444/grandmother-eliza
- "Will," poem by Trevino L. Brings Plenty. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/146690/will-5af07ff9bd3de
- "Advice from La Llorona," poem by Deborah Miranda. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53925/advice-from-la-llorona
- "Smoke in Our Hair," poem by Ofelia Zepeda. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53449/smoke-in-our-hair

- Note-taking supplies for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- This lesson, and subsequent lessons, will be divided into three parts. The first part will unpack the historical construction and treatment of a particular racial/ethnic group in the United States, specifically detailing the persecution of Native Americans and attempts by the ruling, White society to erroneously paint Indigenous people as "savage" and/or uncivilized. To highlight efforts of resistance and underscore a shared humanity, the second part of the lesson will feature modern voices of people who identify as Native and/or as Indigenous Americans. In the suggested video, self-identified Native people speak to their varied life experiences in relation to their racial/ethnic identity. The third, and final, part of the lesson explores literary voices, specifically poems, written by authors who self-identify as Native American. Poems have been selected to represent an array of themes, such as family, love, nature, racial injustice, resistance, longing, beauty, and pride. The goal is for all three parts of the lesson to ultimately create a dynamic story, where history informs the present, and students walk away with more than a "single story" of Native Americans living in the United States.

VOCABULARY

- Consider reviewing the following terms and/or ideas for this lesson: false construction of "savage," blood quantum, sovereignty, decolonization, one-drop rule, etc.
- Also consider reviewing various terms, such as Native American and Indigenous people, compared to Indian and/or Indian American. Though some texts use the term "Indian" to describe people who are indigenous to the Americas, this curriculum recommends using terms like Native American and/or Indigenous people.

Lesson Procedure

PART 1: THE HISTORICAL TREATMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

BACKGROUND

- In order for students to better understand the social construction of race, the first portion of this lesson is devoted to providing a brief overview of the treatment of Native Americans throughout U.S. history. For a general timeline and summary of events, we've utilized Ronald Takaki's text, *A Different Mirror for Young People*, as a primary guide, as well as other sources. Since Grade 5 explores Native Americans before European colonization, this lesson mostly focuses on the experiences of Native Americans after the arrival of Europeans, up through the federal government's creation of reservations.

OPENING

- Remind students of Chimamanda Adichie's idea of the "danger of a single story." Today, we are going to borrow this idea, as we explore "Native American" voices. Remind students that there is no single Native American story. Just as any racial or ethnic group, there is no monolithic experience to being Native American. While there may be a "shared" experience depending on the historical context of time and place, there is no identical experience, or single story.
- In order to better understand the current social realities and diverse life experiences that exist for people who identify as Native American today, we need to understand a general timeline of the historical events that impacted Indigenous people.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Because there are hundreds of years of history to summarize, there are different ways to present the historical information to students. For example, students may complete the recommended reading either the night, or a few nights, before. (Recommended reading is listed in the Materials Part 1 Section.) The teacher may also choose to conduct a group reading and discussion of the material in class, such as by reading the opening pages together and completing the rest during independent reading time, followed by a closing discussion. Additionally, teachers may consider reading from and/or providing students with handouts of the pertinent historical information (which has been included below.) We've also included guiding questions to consider, to promote classroom dialogue about these both challenging and necessary topics of history and race.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After presenting students with the recommended historical information and resources, have a class discussion.
- Consider the following questions: Referencing the treatment of Irish people and Native Americans as cited in the text, what steps did English society take to draw a line between "civilization" and "savagery." What role did violence have in the creation of "the other"? Why did Europeans in the Americas want more land and how did many of them rationalize their violent occupation of such land? What was Thomas Jefferson's view of Native Americans. Why did he believe that Indigenous people had two choices: to become civilized or to be exterminated? As a political leader, how could his way of thinking impact larger U.S. society? Were there White Americans at this time who were opposed to using violence against Indigenous people? Who were they? From the arrival of White settlers to the expansion of the United States as an official county, how did the desire for land factor into the mistreatment and genocide of Native Americans? What were the laws passed by the U.S. which favored and gave advantages to the White population, while disenfranchising, destabilizing, disempowering, and/or removing Native Americans from their homeland? While words like "race" and

"ethnicity" are not used in these particular sections of Takaki's text, how did early White, colonial society view Indigenous people, and how did this perspective begin to establish an unnatural social hierarchy based on physical, cultural, and/or racial differences? How was this racist perspective turned into an unequal social legacy?
- Consider asking students to write a reflection in response to an assigned prompt, perhaps based on one of the questions above (the teacher may assign a particular question, or allow students to choose from a list). Also, as discussions could trigger various feelings and/or emotional responses, consider providing "exit slips" for students to write down ideas, thoughts, feelings, or questions they may have. If they are okay with it, collect their exit slips to inform upcoming discussions.

ESSENTIAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS:

- **Native Americans Before European Colonization:**
  Before European colonization, the people who populated the Americas were rich with cultural diversity. They were farmers, hunters, art makers, etc. Made up of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of nations, tribes, and/or communities, Native Americans were not a monolithic group. In fact, the term Native American represents diverse groups of people, whose main commonality is that they are considered to be Indigenous, or Native, to the land of the Americas. (For more information, please review lessons included in Grade 5.)

- **Arrival of Europeans Marks the Dramatic Loss of Native Americans:**
  The arrival of foreign, White settlers marked the beginning of a tumultuous history for the majority of Native Americans, especially those living in what would eventually become the United States. At the time of colonization, various Europeans — such as Columbus and his army of sailors, and English colonists, like those of Jamestown and Plymouth — engaged in violent campaigns of war, enslavement, and other forms of persecution and inhumane efforts to gain land and personal wealth. Because Native Americans lacked the same geographical advantages of Europeans — such as having access to horses, and iron, and pre-exposure to disease — they faced insurmountable obstacles, with unequal military strength. As a result, a vast majority of the estimated 75 million Indigenous people of the Americas died with the arrival of Europeans. While not all Europeans at the time were immoral or responsible for these events, their arrival in the Americas marks the beginning of the efforts of White settlers, and eventually the U.S. government, to eradicate Native Americans. In this light, what happened to Native Americans may be considered genocide.

- **Myth of Native Americans as "Savage" and the "Other":**
  To excuse the warfare, or genocide, committed against Indigenous people, colonial and early U.S. leaders — including the president, Thomas Jefferson — urged their growing societies to adopt a viewpoint that equated Native Americans with a subjugated, inferior position of "savagery." English settlers were familiar with the idea of the "other," as the English carried out violent campaigns in Ireland, just decades earlier, in an effort to seize Irish land. This pattern would be repeated in North America, as historian Ronald Takaki states, "The high death toll of the Irish soon left the land almost empty, which to the English meant that it was vacant and ready for them to settle it. And the same awful acts that had been committed against the Irish would soon be committed against the Native Americans, often by English veterans of the war in Ireland...Even before the English began colonizing America, they viewed the Native American people as savage, even, sometimes, as less than human." This dehumanization of Native Americans, and/or the myth of Indigenous people as "savage" and/or "uncivilized" unfortunately persisted in historical mainstream White U.S. society and regrettably persists in some modern views today.

- **The "Relationship" of Europeans and Native Americans of the Early Colonial Era:**
  When early Jamestown settlers entered challenging times, such as starvation and even cannibalism, some nearby Native Americans brought food to the settlers. Over the years, some of the English settlers pressured and attacked Native Americans for additional provisions. With the arrival of a new governor, some of the English settlers of Jamestown began burning down Native American villages and attempted to force Indigenous people to work for them as their tobacco crop turned profits, and their settlement grew. According to Takaki, "In just five years, from 1618 to 1623, the population of Jamestown grew from 400 to 4,500." Some Native Americans attempted to drive out the English settlers, whom they viewed as "intruders." A "vicious and treacherous" war ensued, as Takaki describes a series of unfortunate, violent events: "[The English settlers] starved [Native Americans] by burning their food. A captain named William Tucker went to a Powhatan village to make a peace treaty. After they signed the treaty, he persuaded the Indians to drink a toast — then served them poisoned wine, killing an estimated two hundred. Tucker's soldiers 'brought home parts of their heads'

as trophies. By 1629 the goal of the English in Virginia was no longer to civilize or educate the Indians. It was to 'root out [Native Americans] from being any longer a people.'" The European colonists of Plymouth eventually followed a similar inhumane reasoning and plan of action. Upon their arrival, the colonists of Plymouth came across deserted Native American villages and buried rations of corn, as many of the native tribes — the Wampanoag, Pequot, Narragansett, and others — had already died from exposure to disease. According to Takaki, "The colonizers saw the Indian deaths as a sign that God had given the land to them — God was 'making room' for the settlers." As the European settlement grew, so did their desire for land. To justify their imperialistic efforts, some European colonists painted an image of Native Americans as demonic and even subhuman. As Takaki argues, "Religious leaders led the way in justifying violence against the Native Americans. Ministers talked of the war against the Indians as a battle between God and the Devil. Cotton Mather called the Indians 'miserable savages' who worshipped the Devil." It's important to note that not all European Americans or White settlers agreed that Native Americans were subhuman and/or deserved persecution. Yet, it did not stop what Takaki refers to as the Europeans' "relentless conquest of the North American continent."

- **The U.S. Government Systematically Persecuted Native Americans:**
  As the United States became an official country, the thirst for acquiring more land continued. According to Takaki, "In 1776, when the colonists began their War of Independence, Jefferson had supported removing, even destroying, hostile Indians. 'Nothing will reduce those wretches so soon as pushing the war into the heart of their country,' he wrote to a friend. 'But I would not stop there...We would never cease pursuing them with war while one remained on the face of the earth.' In Jefferson's view, Indians had to be either civilized (in other words, made to act like White people) or exterminated." This idea of wiping out Native Americans in order to seize their land dictated the behavior of political leaders and the overall U.S. government's decisions for the decades and centuries that followed. For example, in 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected president. He had made a name for himself as a "war hero," by battling and murdering innocent Creek people, whom he called "savage bloodhounds" and "bloodthirsty barbarians." After Native American nations legally advocated for ownership of their land in the court, the U.S. Supreme Court stated that "states had no power to make laws that affected Indian territories." However, Jackson "simply refused to uphold" the court's decision, and forcibly removed Native Americans off their land. Takaki describes Jackson's actions and the rippling impact in his text: "[Jackson] uprooted seventy thousand Native Americans from their homes and ordered soldiers to move them west of the Mississippi. The removal of the Indians, like the importing of African slaves to work as plantation laborers, helped turn the American South into a cotton kingdom. The major cotton-growing states — Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana — were carved out of Indian Territory." Numerous examples follow, as the U.S. government refused to honor treaties it had made with Native nations and tribes, and instead, forcibly removed people from their land, in an effort to legally expand a country for "White Americans."

- **Reservations and the "End" of the White American Frontier:**
  In 1891, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that "Americans had settled the entire continent, and that the frontier had come to an end." Yet, this definition of "Americans" was limited to White Americans of the U.S. Through campaigns of violence and discriminatory legislation, the U.S. government effectively took land away and attempted to annihilate Native American culture. This systematic effort included, but was not limited to, the creation of the "Indian Reservation System," the Battle of Little Bighorn, the Massacre at Wounded Knee, the creation of boarding schools to "assimilate" Native American children, and the Dawes Act, which divided reservations into smaller lots of land. Despite unfathomable obstacles and targeted violence, Native Americans, even if fewer in number, persisted and continued to live, embracing their cultural heritage and membership to various communities. Currently, over 500 tribes are federally recognized by the U.S. government. Their story is worth remembering, as their cultures go on.

PART 2: NATIVE AMERICAN VOICES: THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

BACKGROUND

- The second part of this lesson focuses on the diverse and shared life experiences of people who identify as Native American in modern society.

OPENING

- In the first part of this lesson, we discussed the discriminatory treatment of Native Americans throughout U.S. history. Today, we are going to learn more about the current social realities of different Native American people.
- Before we watch the video, let's first consider the topic of race. Ask the class: Do you think it's important to talk about race, and other aspects of our identity? Why or why not?

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Show the video, "A Conversation with Native Americans on Race." Please advise students ahead of time to view the film with the utmost maturity and respect.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After viewing, consider the following questions to help guide a discussion: What is the significance of land, geographic location or geography for some of the interviewees? Some interviewees speak about blood quantum and having to prove their "nativeness" in this film. What does this mean? How might this blood quantum demand affect someone as a member of the only racial/ethnic group who has to provide this "proof"? How is this different from the popular practice of getting results from services like 23andMe? One interviewee states, "decolonization is like grieving." What do you think she means? What are your thoughts on the statement made by an interviewee, "My existence is resistance"? What do you think she means?
- Segue into asking students to think about some of the ways the perspectives in the video were different and in what ways the stories were similar? Did anything surprise and/or inspire them?
- Again, consider having a final reflection or distribute "exit slips" for students to process their ideas and feelings.

PART 3: NATIVE AMERICAN LITERARY VOICES: THEMES ACROSS POETRY

BACKGROUND

- In an effort to provide students with literary "Native American" voices, we have suggested an array of poems for students to read through. While we recognize that racial/ethnic categories are limiting and cannot truly represent all people, especially in regard to intersectionality, we have included the voices of those who self-identify as Native American, so students do not create a "single story" of Native Americans. In this collection are ideas that encompass both struggle and resistance, the beauty of the natural world, themes of family and love, etc. While we aim to provide both windows and mirrors with these voices, they are not all-encompassing, rather a beginning. As always, we recommend that a teacher pre-reads and pre-screens all suggested material to ensure they are appropriate for their classroom.

OPENING

- In the second part of this lesson, we watched a video of self-identified Native Americans speaking about their life experiences. Today, we are going to explore literary, or written, voices by reading through a collection of poems by self-identified Native American authors.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Either independently, with a partner, or in small groups, students will read through the suggested collection of poems (listed in the Materials Part 3 Section). Consider reviewing literary and/or poetic devices with students, such as repetition, alliteration, metaphor, similes, hyperbole, personification, onomatopoeia, etc. Literary/poetic devices may be printed on a smaller handout, such as a bookmark, for students to use in this lesson and subsequent lessons.
- Ask students to read through the poems. Consider asking them to think about the following questions: Who is the speaker of the poem? What may have been the author's intent writing this poem? In other words, what messages was she or he trying to convey and/or what seems important to her/him?
- We recommend providing as much time as possible for students to read numerous poems, as a larger collection allows for more text-to-text comparisons. When the allotted time is up, gather students for a discussion.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- Ask the class: What were some of the themes you noticed? (As already mentioned, in order to provide many voices or "stories," poems have been selected to represent an array of themes, such as family, love, nature, racial injustice, resistance, longing, beauty, and pride.) What differences did you note across the poems? What similarities did you note? Highlight specific poems. For example, in "Smoke in Our Hair," by Ofelia Zepeda, she writes "We walk away from the fire; no matter how far we walk, we carry this scent with us. New York City, France, Germany — we catch the scent of burning wood; we are brought home." What may the scent of smoking wood symbolize or represent to Zepeda, or the speaker of the poem? Finally, ask the students: Did your perception of the "Native American" experience or story change after watching the video and reading the collection of poems?
- Since the three-part lesson about Native American voices is closing, consider providing students with a slim notebook to write a final reflection, draft a poem, draw a picture, make a list of questions, jot a list of words to describe their feelings, etc. For a prompt, ask students: For Native Americans, how may the past inform the present?

Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- If time allows, consider reading more fiction by Native American authors.
- For additional poems, consider viewing the Poetry Foundation's online collection of poems, titled, "Native American Poetry and Culture." (Please pre-read and pre-select any poems used, as not all are suitable for a sixth grade audience.) Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144560/native-american-poetry-and-culture

LESSON 3

BLACK AMERICAN VOICES — THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

Grade: 6 | Suggested Time: Three Class Periods
Unit: The Historical Construction of Race and Current Racial Identities Throughout U.S. Society – The Danger of a Single Story
Related Subject(s): English/Language Arts; Social Studies/History

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that Black Americans are are not a monolithic, racial/ethnic community.
- To understand that the term "Black American" and/or "African American" encompasses a diverse group of people with African descent, lineage, and/or ancestors.
- To reject the idea of a "single story" for Black Americans.
- To learn more about the historical events that impacted and created a shared Black American identity, while also recognizing differences.
- To listen to self-identified Black Americans speak about their life experiences.
- To read a collection of poems, written by self-identified Black Americans, which encompasses a multitude of themes.

MATERIALS FOR PART 1

- Excerpts from *A Different Mirror for Young People* by Ronald Takaki adapted by Rebecca Stefoff, Chapter 3, "The Hidden Origins of Slavery," Chapter 5, "Life in Slavery," and Chapter 13, "Blacks Arrive in Northern Cities."
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 2

- "A Conversation About Growing Up Black," video and brief article by Joe Brewster and Perri Petlz for *The New York Times*. Available here: https://nyti.ms/1ES30m8
- "A Conversation with Black Women on Race," video and brief article by Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson for *The New York Times*. Available here: https://nyti.ms/1HD3im3
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 3

- Consider the following poems, written by self-identified Black American and/or African American authors. While we recommend these poems for a sixth grade classroom, as always, please pre-screen any and all resources before using them to ensure they are appropriate for your particular classroom:
  - "February 12, 1963," poem by Jacqueline Woodson. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/92335/february-12th-1963
  - "I, Too," poem by Langston Hughes. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47558/i-too
  - "Harlem," poem by Langston Hughes. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46548/harlem
  - "April Rain Song," poem by Langston Hughes. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51625/april-rain-song
  - "Awaking in New York," poem by Maya Angelou. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48988/awaking-in-new-york
  - "On the Pulse of Morning," poem by Maya Angelou. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48990/on-the-pulse-of-morning
  - "Lineage," poem by Margaret Walker. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53463/lineage

- "Fifth Grade Autobiography," by Rita Dove. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51664/fifth-grade-autobiography
- "July 4, 1974," poem by June Jordan. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48758/july-4-1974
- "Sisters," poem by Lucille Clifton. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54588/sisters-56d2351bacd81
- "Legacies," poem by Nikki Giovanni. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48227/legacies
- "History Lesson," poem by Natasha Trethewey. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47538/history-lesson-56d2280d442a7
- "The African Burial Ground," poem by Yusef Komunyakaa. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/56829/the-african-burial-ground
- "The Slave Auction," poem by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47686/the-slave-auction
- "The Beauty of Black," poem by Margaret Burroughs. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/146264/the-beauty-of-Black
- "Caged Bird," poem by Maya Angelou. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48989/caged-bird
- "Devouring the Light, 1968," Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/141963/devouring-the-light-1968
- "Untitled," poem by James Baldwin. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/88936/untitled-56fd7727ab2dd
- "Nina's Blues," poem by Cornelius Eady. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49355/ninas-blues
- "The Tropics in New York," poem by Claude McKay. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44697/the-tropics-in-new-york
- "Coal," poem by Audre Lorde. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42577/coal
- "Hanging Fire," poem by Audre Lorde. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42580/hanging-fire
- "Butter," poem by Elizabeth Alexander. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52416/butter-56d230df0abef
- "The Song of the Feet," poem by Nikki Giovanni. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/90182/the-song-of-the-feet
- "BLACK History Month," poem by Nikki Giovanni. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/90179/blk-history-month

- Note-taking supplies for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- This lesson, and subsequent lessons, will be divided into three parts. The first part will unpack the historical construction and treatment of a particular racial/ethnic group in the United States, specifically detailing the persecution of Black Americans and attempts by the ruling, White society to erroneously paint enslaved people and people of African descent as "subhuman," and/or "savage." To highlight efforts of resistance and underscore a shared humanity, the second part of the lesson will feature modern voices of people who identify as Black and/or African American. In the suggested videos, self-identified Black Americans speak about their varied life experiences in relation to their racial/ethnic and gender identity. The third, and final, part of the lesson explores literary voices, specifically poems, written by authors who self-identify as Black and/or African American. Poems have been selected to represent an array of themes, such as family, love, nature, racial injustice, resistance, longing, beauty, and pride. The goal is for all three parts of the lesson to ultimately create a dynamic story, where history informs the present, and students walk away with more than a "single story" of Black Americans and/or African Americans living in the United States.

VOCABULARY

- Consider revisiting terms and/or ideas for this lesson, which have already been unpacked in lessons of previous grades, including, but not limited to: enslaved people vs. slave, indentured servant, segregation, integration, racism, etc.

Lesson Procedure

PART 1: THE HISTORICAL TREATMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

BACKGROUND

- In order for students to better understand the social construction of race, the first portion of this lesson is devoted to providing a brief overview of the treatment of Black Americans throughout U.S. history. For a general timeline and summary of events, we've utilized Ronald Takaki's text, *A Different Mirror for Young People*, as a primary guide, as well as other sources. Since Grade 5 explores the lives of Africans before the Transatlantic Slave Trade, this lesson mostly focuses on the experiences of Black Americans and people of African descent, beginning with slavery through the onset of the Civil Rights era. To understand more current forms of racial discrimination and resistance, please read lessons for Grade 8.

OPENING

- Remind students of Chimamanda Adichie's idea of the "danger of a single story." Today, we are going to borrow this idea, as we explore "Black American" voices. Remind students that there is no single Black American story. Just as is the case with any racial or ethnic group, there is no monolithic experience of being Black American. While there may be a "shared" experience depending on the historical context of time and place, there is no identical experience, or single story.
- In order to better understand the current social realities and diverse life experiences that exist for people who identify as Black American today, we need to understand historical events and the historical construction of "Blackness" in early colonial and U.S. society.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Because there are hundreds of years of history to summarize, there are different ways to present the historical information to students. For example, students may complete the recommended reading the night, or a few nights, before. (Recommend reading is listed in the Materials Part 1 Section.) The teacher may also choose to conduct a group reading and discussion of the material in class, such as by reading the opening pages together and completing the rest during independent reading time, followed by a closing discussion. Additionally, teachers may consider reading from and/or providing students with handouts of the pertinent historical information (which has been included below.) We've also included guiding questions to consider, to promote classroom dialogue about these both challenging and necessary topics of history and race.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After presenting students with the recommended historical information and resources, have a class discussion.
- Consider the following questions: Why did early Virginia society intentionally limit the size of the Black population? In what ways did some White indentured servants and Black enslaved people find allegiance during the early colonial era of Virginia? In the 1660s, how did Virginia laws begin to create or engineer an unnatural racial hierarchy? When the Virginia legislature passed laws that enforced "lifetime servitude" for enslaved people and declared that slavery was an inherited status, how did this reinforce the idea of "white vs. black"? What was the impact of Bacon's Rebellion? How did it lead to an increase in the "demand" for Black, enslaved labor? How did racist ideology serve to benefit the White ruling elite, and quell the "unruly underclass" of low-income White colonists and/or White indentured servants? In the 1800s, what forms of racial discrimination did northern Black people endure? How did the creation of false, negative stereotypes of Black people serve to protect and strengthen the institution of slavery? In what ways did free Black people and enslaved Black people exhibit forms of resistance? After the Civil War, did the lives of Black people seemingly improve? What forms of racial and economic discrimination persisted? What was the Great Migration? How did the demographics of urban centers change in the early 1900s? For Black people who migrated to the North, West, or Midwest, what forms of discrimination did they continue to encounter, and what were the more positive consequences of this "great migration" of people? What was the Harlem Renaissance? How did "a surge of power and a sense of pride" among the general Black population help birth the Civil Rights era?
- Consider asking students to write a reflection in response to an assigned prompt, perhaps based on one of the questions above (the teacher may assign a particular question, or allow students to choose from a list). Also,

as discussions could trigger various feelings and/or emotional responses, consider providing "exit slips" for students to write down ideas, thoughts, feelings, or questions they may have. If they are okay with it, collect their exit slips to inform upcoming discussions.

ESSENTIAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS:

- **Roots of Slavery in Virginia:**
  1619 marks the arrival of 20 enslaved Africans to Jamestown, Virginia, who were forced to work the newly developed tobacco fields. While there weren't formal laws on the books identifying slavery as an official institution, many historians do mark this as the beginning of enforced African labor in the colony. At first, the Black population of Virginia was small in numbers. In 1650, there were a few hundred Black people constituting about 2 percent of the population, and in 1675, there were about sixteen hundred Black people, about five percent of the Virginia population. If a labor force was "needed," why was the Black population such a small fraction? According to Takaki, "Most of the Virginia colonists...had brought their families with them. They planned to stay in America, and they wanted to create a reproduction of English society in Virginia. Because English society was White, they wanted Virginia society to remain White as well." Thus, much of the early "servant" class of Virginia was comprised of White indentured servants, who "came from England, Ireland, Germany, from the poor classes and from society's outcasts." These White indentured servants worked alongside Black servants/enslaved people. Because of this, sometimes, Black and White people "joined forces." As Takaki states, "Servants of both races deserted their masters together so often that the Virginia legislature complained about the problem of "'English servants running away with Negroes.'" In order to divide the groups — to weaken their ability to mobilize against the elite, ruling class — White plantation owners and political leaders in early Virginia society began to single out Black people, often giving them more cruel punishments, longer terms of servitude, and eventually, by the mid-1600s, passing laws that made their terms of labor lifelong and inherited. These combined efforts essentially equated "Black servants" as enslaved "property" in the eyes of society and the law. In 1661, Virginia legislature codified the racial caste system, as they "passed a law that allowed lifetime servitude, or slavery, for Blacks." Thus, the institution of slavery was cemented; the roots of this unnatural, engineered hierarchy based on racial inequality permeates throughout U.S. society today.

- **Rebellion and the Legal Separation of a Black-White Allegiance:**
  By law, White indentured servants of early Virginia were promised "forty acres of land" when their service was complete. However, as the richer colonists "scrambled to buy up all the best land," they passed laws that favored their own interests, such as lengthening the years of servitude for White indentured workers, making it harder for such workers to eventually become landowners. As a result, an "unruly underclass" emerged, as bands of mostly White servants got hold of weapons and threatened to kill those who opposed them. Many of these rebellious workers were executed. According to Takaki, "The elite class was so afraid of the landless rabble that in 1670 the Virginia legislature took steps to rein in the political power of the poor. The legislature passed a law saying that only men who owned land could vote." In 1676, an organized militia of thousands of White and Black people killed Native Americans, whom they believed were unfairly attacking them, and then turned their weapons on the White, ruling elite. This rebellion marked a turning point in Virginia. As Takaki argues, "After Bacon's Rebellion, large landowners realized that the social order would always be in danger as long as they relied on White labor." After Bacon's Rebellion, rather than giving "landless freemen" the right to vote, the ruling class instead turned to African slavery as their main source of labor. According to Takaki, "From 5 percent of Virginia's population in 1675, Blacks increased to 25 percent by 1715, and to more than 40 percent by 1750." As the number of Black enslaved people increased, so did racist sentiment. Stricter laws were passed, stripping Black people of basic civil rights. To further weaken racial unity, additional laws were passed, such as barring interracial marriage. Over time, the White ruling class' dependency on enslaved African and Black labor continued to grow, as Takaki writes, "The African American population would grow, and remain enslaved, while it hungered for freedom."

- **Enslavement and Racism in the North and South and a Fight for Freedom:**
  There is a common myth that because the northern colonies and/or states lacked large-scale plantations, life was "easy" for Black people in northern society. Yet, it is well-documented that Black people still received inferior treatment in the North. According to Takaki, "Everywhere Blacks experienced discrimination and segregation." Even in 1860, Black people experienced an unequal status: "They were barred from most hotels and restaurants. In theaters and churches they had to sit in separate sections, always in the back. Black children usually attended separate, inferior schools. Told that their presence in White neighborhoods would

lower property values, Blacks found themselves trapped in crowded, dirty slums. They were excluded from good jobs — in the 1850s nearly 90 percent of working Blacks in New York had menial jobs." The power of the vote was elusive, interracial marriage was largely banned, and White mob violence persisted. As Takaki states, "All in all, for Blacks the North was not the Promised Land. They were not slaves, but they were hardly free." At this same time, around 1860, four million Black Americans in the south were enslaved. In order to "defend themselves against those who called slavery immoral," many White slave owners perpetuated false images and ideas of Black people as "childlike," or "irresponsible," among other negative traits. Using forms of "psychological control," such slave owners tried to "brainwash [enslaved people] into believing that they were racially inferior and suited for bondage." Another stereotype emerged, which unfortunately painted Black people as "savages" or "barbarians," as an erroneous method of "excusing" the violence used against Black and/or enslaved people. Uprisings of enslaved people did occur, and sometimes, freedom was possible. For example, when Frederick Douglass saw, as a young man, that not all Black people were enslaved, he was filled with a "desire for escape and freedom." This desire could not be broken, and after several attempts, he carved his way to freedom, and dedicated the rest of his life to abolitionist efforts.

- **Life After the Civil War:**
  After the Civil War, the Thirteenth Amendment "ended," or rebranded, the institution of slavery (see Grade 8 for more information). With the dawn of Reconstruction, many Black Americans were promised land. This was a short-lived dream, however, as Andrew Johnson, the man who became president after Lincoln's assassination, quickly pardoned White Southern planters and restored their land to them. According to Takaki, "this ended the possibility of real freedom" for Black Americans. Many Black Americans had little choice but to participate in a sharecropper system, as Takaki writes: "Blacks in the South, no longer slaves but unable to get land of their own, became wage earners or sharecroppers, agricultural laborers who worked the land of their former masters in exchange for a part of the crop. Forced to buy goods from stores owned by the planters, they found themselves in a vicious economic cycle, making barely enough to pay their debts, never enough to buy land." Black Americans continued to lose "freedoms" as racial discrimination soared and "Jim Crow" laws were passed, which continued to divide society — cementing a lower social standing for Black Americans and a higher social standing for White Americans.

- **The "Great Migration" North – A Surge of Power and Pride:**
  By the early 1900s, southern Black Americans were moving out of the south by the tens of thousands. According to Takaki, "In just ten years, from 1910 to 1920, the Black population jumped from 5,700 to 40,800 in Detroit, from 8,400 to 34,400 in Cleveland, from 44,000 to 109,400 in Chicago, and from 91,700 to 152,400 in New York. The African Americans who made this journey were both pushed from the South and pulled to the North." As WWI "cut off the flow of European immigrants" to the U.S., Black Americans helped to fill labor shortage in factories, mills, and workshops that had once denied Black workers jobs. Not only did the population begin to shift, a new "generation" was born, as many of these young Black Americans demanded higher wages and began to proudly claim and assert their humanity. The jump in numbers and outward sense of pride, however, "sparked an explosion of White resistance." As Takaki writes, "White citizens formed organizations to pressure real estate agents not to sell houses to Blacks. They also urged White property owners not to sell or rent to Blacks." Racial tensions also swept across the workplace, and riots broke out across major cities, like Chicago. Other cities, like New York, saw the population of Black people increase. Though living conditions in Harlem were often not pristine, as many (White) landlords neglected regular upkeep, the community was considered to be the birthplace of a Black arts movement, one that "felt a surge of power and a sense of pride." Unfortunately, events like the Great Depression would continue to create obstacles for many Black Americans. An ongoing fight for equal rights continued, as seen with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s to the more recent movements of today, such as Black Lives Matter.

PART 2: BLACK AMERICAN VOICES: THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

BACKGROUND

- The second part of this lesson focuses on the diverse and shared life experiences of people who identify as Black American.

OPENING

- In the first part of this lesson, we discussed the social construction and discriminatory treatment of Black Americans throughout U.S. history. Today, we are going to learn more about the current social realities of different Black and/or African American people.
- Before we watch the video, let's first consider the intersectionality of race and gender. Ask the class: Do you think it's important to talk about the intersectionality of race and gender? How may the intersection of our racial identity and gender impact our life experiences?

CLASS ACTIVITY

- For the core activity of this lesson, show the videos: "A Conversation About Growing Up Black," and "A Conversation with Black Women on Race." Please advise students ahead of time to view the film with the utmost maturity and respect. After each video, have a discussion. Suggested discussion questions are below.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After viewing, "A Conversation About Growing Up Black," consider the following to help guide a discussion: One interviewee states, "The way people perceive you is not up to you." Given that this is a film about Black men and boys speaking about their experiences and struggles growing up, what is the significance of this statement? How have some of the boys and/or men adapted their behavior? How may this be seen as an unfair burden? How do those dealing with such burdens hope to maintain their sense of self? As a viewer, what sort of feelings does this bring up for you?
- After viewing, "A Conversation with Black Women on Race," consider the following to help guide a discussion: What were some of the ways in which some of the Black women in the film were affected by the assumptions and actions of others? Think about the statement that was shared about a father shading in characters in various storybooks for his daughter before she read them. What is the significance of this action? How might this action have changed the little girl's experience? Some of the interviewees mentioned their experiences with others' perceptions of their appearance, such as whether or not their hairstyles were "professional." How were assumptions about appearance made? What are better ways to approach differences?
- Segue into asking students to think about some of the ways the perspectives in the video were different and in what ways the stories were similar? Did anything surprise and/or inspire them?
- Consider having a final reflection or distribute "exit slips" for students to process their ideas and feelings.

PART 3: BLACK AMERICAN LITERARY VOICES: THEMES ACROSS POETRY

BACKGROUND

- In an effort to provide students with literary "Black American" voices, we have suggested an array of poems for students to read through. While we recognize that racial/ethnic categories are limiting and cannot truly represent all people, especially in regard to intersectionality, we have included the voices of those who self-identify as Black and/or African American, so students do not create a "single story" of Black Americans. In this collection are ideas that encompass both struggle and resistance, the beauty of the natural world, themes of family and love, etc. While we aim to provide both windows and mirrors with these voices, they are not all-encompassing, rather a beginning. As always, we recommend that a teacher pre-reads and pre-screens all suggested material to ensure they are appropriate for their classroom.

OPENING

- In the second part of this lesson, we watched two videos of self-identified Black Americans speak about their life experiences. Today, we are going to explore literary, or written, voices by reading through a collection of poems by self-identified Black authors.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Either independently, with a partner, or in small groups, students will read through the suggested collection of poems (listed in the Materials Part 3 Section). Consider reviewing literary and/or poetic devices with students, such as repetition, alliteration, metaphor, similes, hyperbole, personification, onomatopoeia, etc. Literary/poetic devices may be printed on a smaller handout, such as a bookmark, for students to use in this lesson and subsequent lessons.
- Ask students to read through the poems. Consider asking them to think about the following questions: Who is the speaker of the poem? What may have been the author's intent writing this poem? In other words, what messages was she or he trying to convey and/or what seems important to her/him?

- We recommend providing as much time as possible for students to read numerous poems, as a larger collection allows for more text-to-text comparisons. When the allotted time is up, gather students for a discussion.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- Ask the class: What were some of the themes you noticed? (As already mentioned, in order to provide many voices or "stories," poems have been selected to represent an array of themes, such as family, love, nature, racial injustice, resistance, longing, beauty, and pride.) What differences did you note across the poems? What similarities did you note? Highlight specific poems. For example, in "I, Too," by Langston Hughes, he writes "They'll see how beautiful I am/ And be ashamed — I too, am America." What may he mean with that statement, "I, too, am America"? Why would "they" feel ashamed; who is "they"? Why is it important to claim an identity — specifically for this speaker of the poem (a "darker brother") — that is aligned with beauty? Finally, ask the students: Did your perception of the "Black American" experience or story change after watching the video and reading the collection of poems?
- Since the three-part lesson about Black American voices is closing, consider having students add to their notebook (an idea suggested in the previous lesson) to write a final reflection, draft a poem, draw a picture, make a list of questions, jot a list of words to describe their feelings, etc. For a prompt, ask students: For Black Americans, how may the past inform the present?

Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- If time allows, consider reading more fiction by Black American authors.
- For additional poems, consider viewing the Poetry Foundation's online collection of poems, titled, "Poetry and the Civil Rights Movement." (Please pre-read and pre-select any poems used, as not all are suitable for a sixth grade audience.) Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/146367/poetry-and-the-civil-rights-movement
- For another online collection, consider viewing a second online collection of poems, titled, "Celebrating Black HIstory Month." (Please pre-read and pre-select any poems used, as not all are suitable for a sixth grade audience.) Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101640/celebrating-Black-history-month
- To enhance teacher understanding, consider reading *Citizen* by Claudia Rankine. If limited on time, another resource for teachers may be Claudia Rankine's article, "The Condition of Black Life Is One of Mourning," for *The New York Times*. Available here: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/magazine/the-condition-of-Black-life-is-one-of-mourning.html
- An additional article by Claudia Rankine, recommended for teacher reading is,"The Meaning of Serena Williams: On Tennis and Black Excellence." Available here: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/magazine/the-meaning-of-serena-williams.html
- To add another "story" or view to the narrative of slavery, consider viewing: "How the Autobiography of a Muslim Slave Is Challenging an American Narrative," video by PBS newshour. Available here: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-the-autobiography-of-a-muslim-slave-is-challenging-an-american-narrative

LESSON 4

WHITE AMERICAN VOICES — THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

Grade: 6 | Suggested Time: Three Class Periods
Unit: The Historical Construction of Race and Current Racial Identities Throughout U.S. Society – The Danger of a Single Story
Related Subject(s): English/Language Arts; Social Studies/History

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that White Americans have a "race" and/or are often grouped in a homogenized social category based on race and/or ethnicity, while recognizing that White Americans are are not a monolithic, racial/ethnic community.
- To understand that the term "White American" encompasses a diverse group of people with European descent, lineage, and/or ancestors.
- To reject the idea of a "single story" for White Americans.
- To learn more about the historical events that led to the racial construction of "Whiteness."
- To listen to self-identified White Americans speak about their ability and/or inability to converse about race.
- To understand that a "colorblind" attitude does not lead to a more racially egalitarian society.

MATERIALS FOR PART 1

- Excerpts from *A Different Mirror For Young People: A History of Multicultural America (For Young People Series)* by Ronald Takaki adapted by Rebecca Stefoff. Recommended selection: Chapter 6, "The Flight from Ireland."
- "What Is Whiteness?" article by Nell Irvin Painter, in *The New York Times*. Available here: https://nyti.ms/1BDb-Shv
- To enhance teacher understanding, consider reading and/or listening to: "Robin DiAngelo On White People's 'Fragility,'" interview and audio podcast on NPR. Available here: https://www.npr.org/2018/08/18/639822895/robin-diangelo-on-White-peoples-fragility
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 2

- "A Conversation with White People on Race," video and brief article by Blair Foster and Michèle Stephenson for *The New York Times*. Available here: https://nyti.ms/1GYQCll
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 3

- Excerpts from *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving. Recommended selection: Chapter 2, "Family Values."
- "*Hillbilly Elegy* Recalls a Childhood Where Poverty Was 'The Family Tradition'," interview text and podcast on NPR. Available here: https://www.npr.org/2016/08/17/490328484/hillbilly-elegy-recalls-a-child-hood-where-poverty-was-the-family-tradition
- For another resource, consider reading: "My Black Sons Wanted to Know: What's It Like to Be a White Male Right Now?" an Op-Ed article by Michael Fitzgerald for *The Boston Globe*. Available here: https://www.bos-tonglobe.com/magazine/2018/07/12/Black-sons-wanted-know-what-like-White-male-america-right-now/Wafkle59xiAMjFGVHpDRGP/story.html
- Note-taking supplies for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- This lesson, and subsequent lessons, will be divided into three parts. The first part will unpack the hisorical construction and treatment of a particular racial/ethnic group in the United States, specifically detailing the construction and homogenization of "Whiteness" and creation of White supremacy in the United States. The second part of the lesson will feature modern voices of people who identify as White. In the suggested video, self-identified White Americans speak to their ability and/or inability to comfortably engage in conversations about race. The third, and final, part of the lesson explores literary voices, specifically two nonfiction narratives, written by authors who self-identify as White Americans, yet had different upbringings, driven by factors like class or socioeconomic status. The goal is for all three parts of the lesson to ultimately create a dynamic story, where history informs the present, and students walk away with more than a "single story" of White Americans living in the United States.

VOCABULARY

- Consider reviewing the following terms and/or ideas for this lesson: Whiteness, White American, European American, homogenized, etc.

Lesson Procedure

PART 1: THE HISTORICAL TREATMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF WHITE AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

BACKGROUND

- In order for students to better understand the social construction of race, the first portion of this lesson is devoted to providing a brief overview of the treatment of White Americans throughout U.S. history. For a general timeline and summary of events, we've utilized Ronald Takaki's text, *A Different Mirror for Young People*, as a primary guide, as well as historian Nell Irvin Painter's writings. Because there is a vast history to summarize, there are different ways to present the historical information to students. For example, students may complete the recommended reading the night, or a few nights, before. (Recommend reading is listed in the Materials Part 1 Section.) The teacher may also choose to conduct a group reading and discussion of the material in class, such as by reading the opening pages together and completing the rest during independent reading time, followed by a closing discussion. Additionally, teachers may consider reading from and/or providing students with handouts of the pertinent historical information (which has been included below.) We've also included guiding questions to consider, to promote classroom dialogue about these challenging topics of history and race.

OPENING

- Remind students of Chimamanda Adichie's idea of the "danger of a single story." Today, we are going to borrow this idea, as we explore "White American" voices. While U.S. society has constructed an homogenized view of Whiteness, there is no single White American story. Just as any racial or ethnic group, there is no monolithic experience to being White American.
- In order to better understand the current social realities and life experiences that exist for people who identify as White American today, we need to understand historical events and the social and legal construction of "Whiteness" in early colonial and U.S. society.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Because there are hundreds of years of history to summarize, there are different ways to present the historical information to students. For example, students may complete the recommended reading the night, or a few nights, before. (Recommend reading is listed in the Materials Part 1 Section.) The teacher may also choose to conduct a group reading and discussion of the material in class, such as by reading the opening pages together and completing the rest during independent reading time, followed by a closing discussion. Additionally, teachers may consider reading from and/or providing students with handouts of the pertinent historical information (which has been included below.) We've also included guiding questions to consider, to promote classroom dialogue about these both challenging and necessary topics of history and race.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After presenting students with the recommended historical information and resources, have a class discussion.
- Consider the following questions: How has the construction of "Whiteness" changed over time? What were the stereotype of the Saxons compared to the Celts? What may Painter mean when she writes, "If you investigate that history, you'll see that White identity has been no more stable than Black identity"? Do you agree or disagree with Painter's assertions? Takaki explains the history of Irish immigrants to paint an example of the construction of Whiteness. In what ways have Irish people historically endured ethnic or cultural discrimination, in both their homeland and in the United States? How did White business owners amplify racial tension to divide workers and increase their own profits? How did Irish immigrants begin to assimilate? How did absorbing racist sentiment "benefit" some Irish Americans? Compared to Native Americans, Black Americans, and other groups of color, why and how were Irish Americans able to gain political power? Why and how were Irish Americans, and other groups from Europe, able to assimilate? In Painter's article, she lists names of White people who advocated for racial and social justice. What may have been her purpose for including these names? Do you think it's important to recognize White allies, why or why not? Finally, when considering the social and legal construction of race, what is Whiteness? How does it compare to other racial categories? How is it given advantage? Is "White" a problematic and/or limiting construction? If so, what would be a better way to construct or approach race?
- Consider asking students to write a reflection in response to an assigned prompt, perhaps based on one of the questions above (the teacher may assign a particular question, or allow students to choose from a list). Also, as discussions could trigger various feelings and/or emotional responses, consider providing "exit slips" for students to write down ideas, thoughts, feelings, or questions they may have. If they are okay with it, collect their exit slips to inform upcoming discussions.

ESSENTIAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS:

- **Why Examine Whiteness?:**
  Though the "White" identity has more or less existed since the colonial era of U.S. history, some people are thwarted when asked to speak about a White identity, especially if it's their own racial identity. According to historian Nell Irvin Painter: "An essential problem here is the inadequacy of White identity. Everyone loves to talk about Blackness, a fascinating thing. But bring up Whiteness and fewer people want to talk about it. Whiteness is on a toggle switch between 'bland nothingness' and 'racist hatred.'" Painter declares that there is an "inadequacy of White identity," as she asserts, "we don't know the history of Whiteness, and therefore are ignorant of the many ways it has changed over the years." Academic Robin DiAngelo pushes the conversation by arguing that this inadequacy or "discomfort" surrounding a discussion of Whiteness, White supremacy, and/or racism serves to uphold the system that provides advantages to specific populations, specifically White Americans. DiAngelo writes: "White people in North America live in a society that is deeply separate and unequal by race, and White people are the beneficiaries of that separation and inequality. As a result, we are insulated from racial stress, at the same time that we come to feel entitled to and deserving of our advantage." Because of this system of inequality, DiAngelo argues: "The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable — the mere suggestion that being White has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses. These include emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation. These responses work to reinstate White equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy. I conceptualize this process as White fragility." Whether one agrees or disagrees with the arguments of academics like Painter and DiAngelo, it is clear that in order to develop our own racial literacy we must discuss and analyze the "White" identity, starting with its historical construction.

- **The Historical Construction of Whiteness:**
  Created during European colonization (and reinforced during the formation of the U.S.), race is a social construct, designed to provide some people with advantage and to create a disadvantaged status, or unequal opportunity and access, for others. As race has been constructed in the United States, White people have been given measurable social advantage, while people of color have been relegated to an unfair status when analyzing various social sectors, such as access to education, housing, wealth, the legal system, etc. Yet, this construction, even of Whiteness, has a sense of fluidity. According to Painter, "Constructions of Whiteness have changed over time, shifting to accommodate the demands of social change." Though the term "White" was used in early colonial and U.S. society for centuries, such as appearing as a racial category on the first U.S. Census in 1790, the idea of Whiteness varied, including the idea that more than one White race

existed. Painter writes, "Before the mid-19th century, the existence of more than one White race was commonly accepted, in popular culture and scholarship." For example, an early concept of Whiteness divided the White race into two categories: "Saxons" and "Celts." The word "race" was used to describe these groups of people with different origins. The people of the "Saxon race" — or those from northern Europe, with ancestral ties to Great Britain and Germany — were considered to be "intelligent, energetic, sober, Protestant and beautiful." Meanwhile, the "Celts" — or those with Irish, Scottish, or Welsh ancestry — were considered to be "stupid, impulsive, drunken, Catholic, and ugly." Such stereotypes persisted until new groups of European immigrants arrived, complicating, or shifting, this binary. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, as large groups, or a "wave," of low-income immigrants entered the U.S. from other parts of Europe, new racial classifications emerged, such as the "Northern Italian" race, the "Southern Italian" race, and the "Eastern European Hebrew" race. Through pseudoscientific assessments, including measurements of the physical dimensions of people's heads and "intelligence" tests, these groups were erroneously deemed inferior, as the Celts had been. However, forms of ethnic discrimination for European Americans did not last for centuries, as the social construction of "White" continued to transform throughout the 20th century. For instance, with the rise of Nazi Germany, the preferred term of "Saxon" waned, in favor of Nordic. Additionally, the rampant discrimination asserted against Irish people gradually decreased as some Irish Americans were able to rise to a higher socioeconomic status, as well as an homogenized construction of "Whiteness." (More information about the history and construction of "Irish Americans" is included below.) Over time, more and more European Americans (and other ethnic groups, including those from select regions of the Middle East and North Africa) were homogenized into a group of "Whiteness," solidifying a racial hierarchy that subjugated people of color to a disadvantaged status, and associated Whiteness with unearned privileges, or as Peggy McIntosh describes, as "exemption from [racial] discrimination."

- **An Example of the Construction of Whiteness – How the Irish Became White:**
  Historian Ronald Takaki describes the construction of Whiteness in his text, using Irish Americans as an example. Historically, Irish people have largely endured centuries of ethnic or cultural discrimination. Takaki describes this history of hardship, which emerged in Europe: "Beginning in the twelfth century, the English conquest of Ireland caused Irish land to be seized and transferred to colonizers from England. By 1700 the Irish owned only 14 percent of Ireland. Farmers had to rent or lease land from English landowners in order to grow food for their families...Things got worse in the eighteenth century, when the English landlords decided to make their Irish properties more profitable...Ireland became a land of 'extremely poor' tenants, who lived on other people's land in 'dirty hovels of mud and straw, and clothed only in rags.'" By the 1830s, Takaki argues that "the common people had been reduced to wretchedness." The average Irish family lived in "huts," sharing a single bed made of straw, surviving on potatoes. When the Potato Blight, or famine, hit Ireland between 1845 and 1855, it is estimated that a million Irish died from starvation. Takai describes this event: "For many landlords, the famine was a chance to turn even more of their property into fields for grazing. Peasants who could not pay their rent were turned out of their huts. The landlords kept shipping beef and grain to British markets, while the starving Irish peasants wandered the countryside like 'famished and ghastly skeletons' and families ate seaweed in a desperate attempt to stay alive." Panicked and desperate, more than a million Irish people fled to the U.S. From 1855 to 1900, two million more Irish emigrated. At first, when Irish Americans arrived in the U.S., they provided labor for much-needed infrastructure projects, such as constructing roads, canals, and the railroads (working alongside many Chinese immigrants), and working as miners. These proved to be hazardous, taxing jobs. Irish immigrants also faced ethnic discrimination, as Takaki writes, "America turned out to be a nightmare for many Irish immigrants. They complained of being treated like dogs, or worse, 'despised & kicked about.'" At times, Irish workers (as well as Chinese and Black workers) were used by business owners, who relied on racial tension to keep wages low, as Takaki asserts, "The Irish immigrants found themselves not only exploited as laborers, but also pitted against Chinese and Black workers." For example, in response to earning low wages in the shoemaking industry, Irish workers created a union, called the Knights of St. Crispin, which quickly became the largest labor organization of its time in 1870, with fifty thousand members. When the Irish workers went on strike, the owner brought in "seventy-five Chinese workers from San Francisco to replace the striking Crispins." With such acts, business owners, who were mostly White, encouraged jealousy and racist ideology, or anti-Chinese sentiment, among Irish laborers. Takaki explains: "A magazine suggested that business owners might find Chinese workers to be the solution to the problem of unions and organized labor in the United States. The Chinese were held up as a model for Irish laborers. Chinese workers were said to be harder working and quicker to learn than the Irish." Other members of White American society, including Reverend Theodore Parker of Boston, declared Irish people to be "inferior in nature," equating the Irish to "Negroes, Indians, Mexicans...and the like." Others used

words like "savage" and "civilized" to describe the Irish. Though many people of Ireland had supported abolitionist ideology, many sadly began to adopt an "anti-Black" viewpoint after living in the U.S. Takaki writes: "As they competed against Blacks for jobs, Irish immigrants called attention to their race. In a 'country of the Whites,' they asked, shouldn't White workers be chosen over Blacks?... Identifying African Americans as 'the other' was a way for the Irish to assimilate, or blend, into White society." Throughout the 1900s, more Irish people immigrated to the U.S., including large numbers of women, who were mostly limited to jobs in domestic service and factories. Over time, a pattern of social and economic mobility emerged for Irish Americans, that was not readily available for immigrants of color, as Takaki explains: "The fact that the Irish were White helped them assimilate into the mainstream. White immigrants could become naturalized citizens. White young people could apply to the best colleges and universities. The Chinese were prevented by racial laws from becoming naturalized citizens, and large numbers of African Americans had had their right to vote stripped away. But Irish Americans had suffrage, and they used their right to vote to gain political power." This rise of political power paralleled the Irish American entrance into a homogenized view of Whiteness.

- **A New Way to Conceptualize Race?:**
  According to Painter, by the 1940s, anthropologists presented a new form of racial classification,"one Negroid race, one Mongoloid race, [and] one Caucasoid race," which they called, "the only real races." This classification conflated previous delineations of White races, further solidifying a homogenized, or integrated view of Whiteness. In the 1970s, perhaps inspired by the "Black is Beautiful" movement, some groups of people with ancestry from Europe — such as Italians, Irish, Greeks, and Jews — enthusiastically used terms like "ethnic" to describe themselves. Yet, the racial binary of Whiteness and Blackness persisted, as Painter states, "But this ethnic self-discovery did not alter the fact that Whiteness continued to be defined, as before, primarily by what it isn't: Blackness." Without Blackness, there is no Whiteness. In other words, without ideas like "Whiteness" and "Blackness," there is no superior or inferior racial category, or advantaged or disadvantaged social status, to embody. This binary, hierarchical view of race, as "White" and "non-White" (or White vs people of color) continues to dominate the current social construction of race and ethnicity in the U.S. Some argue that new definitions of race should emerge, definitions that deconstruct the hierarchy and reconstruct it into something new. Furthermore, some sociologists and academics call for the dismantling of this supreme, racial category of "White," which may help to eliminate "White privilege." For example, Painter asserts: "Eliminating the binary definition of Whiteness — the toggle between nothingness and awfulness — is essential for a new racial vision that ethical people can share across the color line." She goes on to suggest: "Just as race has been reinvented over the centuries, let's repurpose the term 'abolitionist' as more than just a hashtag. The 'abolition' of White privilege can be an additional component of identity (not a replacement for it), one that embeds social justice in its meaning. Even more, it unifies people of many races." Perhaps a first step is recognizing that while it is not a monolithic identity, if other groups have a racial category, then White people do too.

PART 2: WHITE AMERICAN VOICES: A CONTINUUM OF RACIAL AWARENESS

BACKGROUND

- The second part of this lesson focuses on the racial perspectives of those who identify as White American.

OPENING

- In the first part of this lesson, we discussed the historical construction of Whiteness. Today, we are going to learn more about the current social realities of different White Americans.
- Before we watch the video, let's first consider the social position of Whiteness and the reluctance to speak about race, especially for some White people. Do you think it's important for all people, especially White people, to talk about race? Why or why not? By ignoring race, what is there to lose? What is there to gain by discussing race?

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Show the video, "A Conversation with White People on Race." Please advise students ahead of time to view the film with the utmost maturity and respect.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After viewing, consider the following to help guide a discussion: One interviewee speaks about "a system of advantages based on race." What do you think she means by this? What advantages do you think she is referring to? An interviewee brings up the idea of "colorblindness" as something that White people might think of more than others. What does this idea of "colorblindness" mean? How might this idea affect people of color? How does this idea affect White people? For those people who are hesitant to speak about race, what strategies could they use to engage more with the topic?
- Segue into asking students to think about some of the ways the perspectives in the video were different and in what ways the stories were similar?
- Again, consider having a final reflection or distribute "exit slips" for students to process their ideas and feelings.

PART 3: WHITE AMERICAN LITERARY VOICES: THE INTERSECTION OF CLASS

BACKGROUND

- The second part of this lesson focuses on two literary voices that are part of the White American community. Because White authors dominate the "canon" of U.S. literature, we have recommended a different structure for this lesson, one that provides a window into the role class, or socioeconomic status — as well as religion and other social forms of identity — has on the "White" experience.

OPENING

- In the second part of this lesson, we watched a video of self-identified White Americans speak about race, and their hesitancy to address the topic, especially with confidence. Today, we are going to explore the literary, or written, voices of two self-identified White authors who come from different backgrounds, with different socioeconomic and cultural identities.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Introduce the authors and texts: *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving, Chapter 2, "Family Values," and an interview of J.D. Vance speaking about his memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*. (Recommended reading is listed in the Materials Part 3 Section.)
- Though both authors are White, they come from different cultural and class backgrounds. As a class, read the opening of each text. Either independently, or in small groups, students should finish reading and annotating the texts (or portions of the text, as both are lengthy), looking for similarities and differences in the authors' experiences. As always, pre-read materials to ensure they are appropriate for your particular classroom.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- Ask the class: What were some of the themes you noticed? What differences did you note across the two authors' perspectives? What similarities did you note? What role did privilege or advantage play in their life? Was there a difference between the privileges of one author compared to the other? Did religion have a role in their life? How did their class background impact their childhoods? How did each author view their own racial and/or cultural background? For example, what may Irving mean when she writes, "I identified 100 percent as a New England WASP"? What kinds of opportunities were associated with this identity, and what kinds of wealth and cultural access did Irving inherit by being born into her family? Contrastingly, Vance says, "I may be White, but I do not identify with the WASPs of the Northeast. Instead, I identify with the millions of working-class White Americans of Scots-Irish descent who have no college degree." What role did financial poverty play in his life? What may Vance's grandmother have meant when she tells him, "We're hill people"? Finally, did the students' perception of the "White American" experience or story change after watching the video and reading about their lives? If so, how?
- Since the three-part lesson about White American voices is closing, consider having students add to their notebooks (an idea suggested in a previous lesson) to write a final reflection, draft a poem, draw a picture, make a list of questions, jot a list of words to describe their feelings, etc. For a prompt, ask students: For White Americans, does the past inform the present? How? Is it important to recognize this? Why?

Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- For another example of an ethnic group that was eventually included into an homogenized view of Whiteness, consider reading: "How Armenian-Americans Became 'White': A Brief History," article by the Ajam Media Collective. Available here: https://ajam-mc.com/2017/08/29/armenian-Whiteness-america/
- For a perspective on the historical experience of Jewish immigrants from the late 1800s on, consider reading an excerpt from *A Different Mirror For Young People: A History of Multicultural America* by Ronald Takaki adapted by Rebecca Stefoff. Recommended selection: Chapter 11, "Jews Are Pushed from Russia."

LESSON 5

LATINX VOICES — THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

Grade: 6 | Suggested Time: Three Class Periods
Unit: The Historical Construction of Race and Current Racial Identities Throughout U.S. Society – The Danger of a Single Story
Related Subject(s): English/Language Arts; Social Studies/History

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that Latinx Americans are are not a monolithic, racial/ethnic community.
- To understand that the term "Latinx," or "Latinos/Latinas," and/or "Hispanic," encompasses a diverse group of peoples and cultures that are connected to a landmass that typically includes Mexico, Central America, South America and parts of the Caribbean. Ancestral ties often include parts of Africa, Europe, and even Asia.
- To reject the idea of a "single story" for Latinx Americans.
- To learn more about the historical events that impacted and created a shared Latinx American identity, while also recognizing differences.
- To listen to self-identified Latinx Americans speak about their life experiences.
- To read a collection of poems, written by self-identified Latinx Americans, which encompasses a multitude of themes.

MATERIALS FOR PART 1

- Excerpts from *A Different Mirror for Young People* by Ronald Takaki adapted by Rebecca Stefoff. Recommended section: Chapter 7, "The War Against Mexico," and Chapter 12, "Up From Mexico."
- If another resource is desired, consider reading excerpts from *A Young People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn and Rebecca Stefoff. Recommended section: Chapter 8, "War with Mexico."
- For more information, read the timeline descriptions and/or watch the videos from the site: "Latino Americans," created by PBS. Available here: http://www.pbs.org/latino-americans/en/timeline/
- To enhance teacher understanding, consider watching: "Foreigners in Their Own Land," episode one of a PBS series. Available here: https://www.pbs.org/video/latino-americans-episode-1-foreigners-their-own-land/
- To enhance teacher understanding, consider reading: "The Brutal History of Anti-Latino Discrimination in America," article on History.com. Available here: https://www.history.com/news/the-brutal-history-of-anti-latino-discrimination-in-america
- To enhance teacher understanding, consider watching and reading "Mexican-American War," video and article, on History.com. Available here: https://www.history.com/topics/mexican-american-war/mexican-american-war
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 2

- "A Conversation with Latinos on Race," video and brief article by Joe Brewster, Blair Foster, and Michèle Stephenson for *The New York Times*. Available here: https://nyti.ms/215J9sp
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 3

- Consider the following poems, written by Latinx authors. While we recommend these poems for a sixth grade classroom, as always, please pre-screen any and all resources before using them to ensure they are appropriate for your particular classroom:
  - "El Poema de lo Reverso," poem by Victor Hernández Cruz. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55719/el-poema-de-lo-reverso
  - "Red Beans," poem by Victor Hernández Cruz. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55720/red-beans
  - "Dolores Street," poem by Victor Hernández Cruz. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49441/dolores-street
  - "A Blank Page," poem by Francisco X. Alarcón. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/91107/a-blank-White-page
  - "L.A. Prayer," poem by Francisco X. Alarcón. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/58135/la-prayer
  - "Ode to My Shoes," poem by Francisco X. Alarcón. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/91109/ode-to-my-shoes
  - "A New National Anthem," by Ada Limón. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/147506/a-new-national-anthem
  - "Bilingual/Bilingüe," poem by Rhina P. Espaillat. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46542/bilingual-bilingue
  - "Antigua," poem by Gary Soto. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=33698
  - "Second Estrangement," poem by Aracelis Girmay. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/141993/second-estrangement
  - "Norse Saga," poem by Dan Vera. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/143249/norse-saga
  - "Identity," poem by Angela C. Trudell Vasquez. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/146927/identity-5b05c79b7b931
  - "Gloves," poem by José Angel Araguz. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51968/gloves
  - "The Ashes," poem by Gary Soto. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=34482
  - "Marta Alvarado, History Professor," poem by Marjorie Agosín. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57786/marta-alvarado-history-professor
  - "Eternity," poem by Frank Lima. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/89592/eternity-57508bbababd9
  - "The Art Room," poem by Shara McCallum. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51771/the-art-room
  - "That's My Heart Right There," poem by Willie Perdomo. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/148700/thats-my-heart-right-there
  - "Last Photograph of My Parents," poem by Ruben Quesada. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/147050/last-photograph-of-my-parents
  - "Blizzard," poem by William Carlos Williams. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45496/blizzard-56d225206b7ca
  - "Heroics," poem by Julia Alvarez. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=35138
  - "New Clothes," poem by Julia Alvarez, Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=35139
- Note-taking supplies for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- This lesson, and subsequent lessons, will be divided into three parts. The first part will unpack the historical construction and treatment of a particular racial/ethnic group in the United States, specifically detailing the persecution of Latinx Americans, which will mostly focus on Mexicans and Mexican Americans, the first group of Latinos/as to be a part of the U.S. (For more information about other Latinx groups, specifically Puerto Ricans, please see Grade 5). To highlight efforts of resistance and underscore a shared humanity, the second part of the lesson will feature modern voices of people who identify as "Latino," which includes a larger representation of the Latinx community. In the suggested video, self-identified "Latinos" people speak

to their varied life experiences in relation to their racial/ethnic identity. The third, and final, part of the lesson explores literary voices, specifically poems, written by authors who self-identify as Latinx. Poems have been selected to represent an array of themes, such as family, love, nature, racial injustice, resistance, longing, beauty, and pride. The goal is for all three parts of the lesson to ultimately create a dynamic story, where history informs the present, and students walk away with more than a "single story" of Latinos and Latinas living in the United States.

VOCABULARY

- Consider reviewing the following terms and/or ideas for this lesson: fetishize, supreme, supremacy, White supremacy.
- In the recommended text, Takakai describes White Americans as "illegally" living in Mexico, referring to them as "illegal aliens." Consider unpacking this idea, which flips the popularized use of the term.
- Consider reviewing the term "Latinx," which is a gender-neutral term used in lieu of Latina or Latino. The plural version is Latinxs.
- Also consider reviewing the current social construction of Latinx. As of 2010, the U.S. Census views the Latinx community — or people with "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin" — as an ethnic group, not a race per se. For the purposes of this curriculum Latinx will be considered as both a racial and/or ethnic group.

Lesson Procedure

PART 1: THE HISTORICAL TREATMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF LATINX AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

BACKGROUND

- In order for students to better understand the social construction of race and ethnicity, the first portion of this lesson is devoted to providing a brief overview of the treatment of Latinx people throughout U.S. history. For a general timeline and summary of events, we've utilized Ronald Takaki's text, *A Different Mirror for Young People*, as a primary guide, as well as other sources. This lesson mostly focuses on the experiences of Latinos and Latinas, beginning with the Mexican American War and the subsequent mistreatment of Mexicans in the U.S., with a brief introduction to the annexation of Puerto Rico and the arrival of Cubans.

OPENING

- Remind students of Chimamanda Adichie's idea of the "danger of a single story." Today, we are going to borrow this idea, as we explore "Latinx" voices. Remind students that there is no single Latinx American story. Just as with any racial or ethnic group, there is no monolithic experience to being Latinx. While there may be a "shared" experience depending on the historical context of time and place, there is no identical experience, or single story.
- In order to better understand the current social realities and diverse life experiences that exist for people who identify as Latinx today, we need to understand historical events that led to the "rise" of a Latin American identity in U.S. society.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Because there are hundreds of years of history to summarize, there are different ways to present the historical information to students. For example, students may complete the recommended reading the night, or a few nights, before. (Recommend reading is listed in the Materials Part 1 Section.) The teacher may also choose to conduct a group reading and discussion of the material in class, such as by reading the opening pages together and completing the rest during independent reading time, followed by a closing discussion. Additionally, teachers may consider reading from and/or providing students with handouts of the pertinent historical information (which has been included below.) We've also included guiding questions to consider, to promote classroom dialogue about these both challenging and necessary topics of history and race.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After presenting students with the recommended historical information and resources, have a class discussion.

- Consider the following questions: Why did White settlers want to occupy land in the region of Tejas, or Texas? How did the institution of slavery feed into this desire for more land? At this time, who was publicly against the war and who was for it? In his text, Takaki uses the term "illegal aliens" to describe early White American settlers who illegally possessed land in Mexico. What does he mean by this term? How is he "flipping" the popularized use of this term around? How did Stephen Austin utilize racist ideology to promote the war effort against Mexico? By signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, how much land did the U.S. acquire or seize? As historian Howard Zinn asserts, if they "won" the war, why did the U.S. government pay Mexico $15 million for its land? How did Mexicans become "foreigners in their own land?" How did the U.S. court system favor White Americans and disadvantage Mexicans and Mexican Americans? What kinds of jobs were available to Mexican Americans? How did they resist unfair working conditions? How was the Japanese Mexican Labor Association a form of ethnic or racial solidarity? What were some of the positive consequences of striking, especially in regard to the formation of a collective racial or ethnic identity? What were some of the ways the U.S. government systematically discriminated against Mexicans and Puerto Ricans? How did the Latinx identity in the U.S. change over time?
- Consider asking students to write a reflection in response to an assigned prompt, perhaps based on one of the questions above (the teacher may assign a particular question, or allow students to choose from a list). Also, as discussions could trigger various feelings and/or emotional responses, consider providing "exit slips" for students to write down ideas, thoughts, feelings, or questions they may have. If they are okay with it, collect their exit slips to inform upcoming discussions.

ESSENTIAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS:

The U.S. Wages War with Mexico:

Hungry for land, White settlers and government forces of the United States continued moving west in the 1800s. As they did, they came across Native Americans and land "occupied and owned" by Mexico. In 1854, General Zachary Taylor led a group of men to the southwest of Texas, an event that initiated a bloody war in order to expand the land-size of the U.S. Before the war, Mexico was a large country, stretching across parts of current-day Wyoming and Colorado, and included the land areas of current-day Texas, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and California. The western border of the U.S. was marked by the Rocky Mountains. At this time, a majority White U.S. echoed the slogan of "Manifest Destiny," or the belief that occupying land, all the way to the Pacific — even through violence — was their inherent right. Some of the first conflicts between Mexico and the U.S. began in the region of Tejas, or what is now known as Texas. Even though Texas was officially part of Mexico, many White American settlers began squatting there in the 1820s. According to Takaki, "Many [of these White settlers] slaveholders came from the South in search of new lands on which to grow cotton." The U.S. offered to buy Texas for a price of a million dollars, but the Mexican government refused. Over the years, more and more White settlers — breaking Mexican laws — moved to the Mexican region of Texas, where they illegally took possession of land. To curb the numbers of White Americans in the territory, the Mexican government outlawed slavery and banned immigration. Takaki describes this chain of events: "American foreigners in Texas were furious. Many were determined to defy Mexico's anti-slavery law. At the same time, more Americans crossed the border into Mexico as illegal aliens. By 1835 there were twenty thousand Americans in Texas, greatly outnumbering the four thousand Mexicans." Stephen Austin, one of these "American colonizers," urged the White settlers in Texas to "Americanize" the territory, arguing that they were "civilized," while Mexicans were of an inferior "mongrel Spanish-Indian and Negro race." As a result, White settlers in Texas formed an armed uprising, in a fort called the Alamo. The Mexican army responded, and many White settlers were killed in battle. The White settlers continued their war efforts, as Takaki writes, "Under the rallying cry 'Remember the Alamo!' the Americans counterattacked, killing 630 Mexican soldiers and capturing their leader. The victorious Americans declared Texas an independent country and named it the Lone Star Republic." According to historian Howard Zinn, a numerical minority of Congress opposed slavery, and were concerned that a new territory like Texas, would be a new "slave state." A large majority of U.S. society, however, "cheered the news of war." Rallies were held to support the war, thousands of people volunteered to serve in the army. Even the poet Walt Whitman, wrote in a newspaper, "'America knows how to crush, as well as how to expand!'" Some authors were against the war, such as Henry David Thoreau, who wrote an essay titled, "Civil Disobedience," describing soldiers as "agents of injustice." Some members and leaders of churches spoke out against the war. Activists, like Frederick Douglass, called the war "'disgraceful' and 'cruel'." Diplomatic relations between Mexico and the U.S. continued to sour. Using war as a tactic, the U.S. government planned on seizing the land of California. Prized for its raw materials and coastline, which could host naval and trading ships, California was viewed as a way to expand global trade and commercial profits. To gain this land, U.S. military forces and volunteers marched alongside each other, committing acts of violence against Mexican civilians.

Despite some public outcry, campaigns of violence carried on, as U.S. government forces and White rebel groups, such as the "Bear Flag Republic," instigated bloody battles for land. Thousands on both "sides" of the battles died, including civilians. Facing absurd levels of death from violence and disease, many U.S. soldiers deserted the army, and for those who returned, many did not receive the land promised to them. Finally, in early 1848, the U.S. and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Takaki describes the decline of the Mexican territory and the growth of the U.S. empire: "In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico accepted the Rio Grande as the border of Texas. Mexico also turned the Southwest territories over to the United States in exchange for $15 million. The treaty gave the United States a vast new territory: New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, parts of Colorado and Utah, and California, its prime target. Together with Texas, these territories had made up more than half of Mexico." This exchange of money, allowed the U.S. government to promote the idea that the nation's new territories were "bought," not seized through violence and by force.

- **Mexican Americans – A "New" Racial Group Forms in the U.S.:**
  After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the U.S. expanded its territory and acquired a "new" ethnic group. Takaki describes the series of events: "While Irish women worked in the textile mills of Massachusetts and Irish men built roads and railway tracks, America's frontier moved westward. The United States grew larger by acquiring territory from other nations by purchase, treaty, or force. In the 1840s, the Mexican-American war gave Irish immigrant men another job to do for the United States — serving as soldiers in a conflict with the neighboring nation of Mexico. That war greatly enlarged the American empire by adding California and the Southwest to the United States. It also added another ethnic group to American diversity: Mexicans." With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the national border was moved. As a result, thousands of Mexicans suddenly found themselves living inside of the U.S. For those who stayed, they were promised the same rights granted to American citizens. However, Mexicans living in the U.S. lacked political power, such as the right to vote. Quickly, the White population outnumbered the Mexican population in the southwest. Even though the Treaty guaranteed Mexicans rights to their lands, the court systems of the U.S. peeled backed those rights. Because of this, White settlers in the region seized about four-fifths of the land that belonged to Mexicans. Over time, Mexicans were systematically targeted and forced to become landless. According to Takaki, "In Texas as well as in other parts of the United States that had once belonged to Mexico, most Mexicans were no longer landholders. They had become laborers." As a result, many of these Mexicans, then living in the U.S., had to work in ranching and agricultural sectors, as well work to build the railroads in the late 1800s. The positions they held and the wages they earned were related to their status as Mexicans. Takaki writes, "Whatever kind of work they did, Mexican laborers found themselves in a system in which job rank was tied to race." To fight back, Mexican workers went on strike. Alongside Japanese workers, Mexicans demanded better wages and eight-hour workdays. They even formed a union called the Japanese Mexican Labor Association, which held meetings in Japanese and Spanish. Yet, this union was not recognized by the American Federation of Labor, which was not willing to grant membership to Japanese or Chinese members. Nevertheless, strikes continued. One of the most powerful demonstrations began in the early 1900s, when thousands of miners, most of them Mexican, went on strike. After enduring hundreds of arrests, and years of racist treatment, miners eventually began to earn higher wages. The benefits of such resistance had more positive consequences than wages and improved working conditions, however, as Takaki suggests, "The strikes brought out a feeling of ethnic solidarity." He writes: "As the [organizations] grew and became more organized, they blew away the myth of Mexicans as a quiet, siesta-loving, sombrero-wearing people. Through these ethnic organizations, Mexican Americans unified to resist racism and exploitation. In efforts to overcome obstacles, a strong new Mexican identity was formed in the U.S. Takaki describes the Mexican American identity as a "proud attachment to the culture south of the border as well as a fierce determination to claim their rights and dignity north of the border."

- **The Ebb and Flow of Latinx Immigrants:**
  After seizing land that once belonged to Mexico, the U.S. government continued its imperialistic efforts. In 1898, after a war with Spain, the U.S. acquired the "territory" of Puerto Rico. In 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship, but did not have the same rights as U.S. citizens, such as the ability to vote in presidential elections. Throughout the Depression era of the 1930s, in response to racist sentiment that specific racial/ethnic groups were "taking jobs," the U.S. government forcibly deported between 300,000 to 500,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans to Mexico. Some of those deported were actual U.S. citizens. In the following decade, with the arrival of WWII, Latinos enlisted in the U.S. Army, becoming the largest "ethnic group" serving in the war. When labor was needed, the Latinx community was more fully embraced. In 1951, the U.S. passed the "Bracero Program," which brought an average of 350,000 Mexican workers per year to

the U.S. The program would end in the next decade. In 1954, constitutional rights were extended to Mexican Americans with the Supreme Court case of Hernandez v. The State of Texas. However, also in 1954, the U.S. government launched "Operation Wetback," an initiative that allowed the government to "locate and deport" undocumented workers. As a result, from 1954 to 1958, nearly 4 million people of Mexican descent were deported. In 1956, efforts to preserve public segregations were introduced by Congress. Four years later, the tide switched again as the presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy formed "Viva Kennedy" clubs and a civil rights agenda, partially to "carry the Latino vote." Later that year, fleeing Fidel Castro's rule, 200,000 Cubans arrived in Miami, Florida. In 1962, the U.S. government banned travel to Cuba. When Lyndon B. Johnson became president, after the assassination of JFK, he appointed more Mexican Americans to government positions. In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of "race, color, religion, sex or national origin." As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum, farm workers in California also began to strike. Iconic leaders emerged, such as Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez. In the following decades, as immigration from other Central American and South American countries increased, the Latinx population grew in its diversity.

PART 2: LATINX AMERICAN VOICES: THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

BACKGROUND

- The second part of this lesson focuses on the diverse and shared life experiences of people who identify as Latinx.

OPENING

- In the first part of this lesson, we discussed the historical treatment of Latinx people in the U.S., such as Mexican Americans. Today, we are going to learn more about the current social realities of what it may be like to identity as Latinx.
- Before we watch the video, let's first consider the "definition" of what constitutes Latinx. According to the U.S. Census, the identity of "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin," is considered an ethnicity, comprised of one or many races, not a single race or racial category. Why do you think it's categorized this way? Do you agree or disagree with the idea of equating "Latinx" to an ethnic identity, when White, Black, and Asian are considered racial identities?

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Show the video, "A Conversation with Latinos on Race." Please note a racial epithet is used in this video. As always, please pre-screen to assess if it is appropriate for your particular classroom. Please advise students ahead of time to view the film with the utmost maturity and respect.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After viewing, consider the following to help guide a discussion: Some interviewees spoke about struggling to find a racial identity. Which categories did they seem to feel they must choose from? Why may they feel this way? Can people belong to more than one identity group? What might the interviewee who said, "Ni de aquí, ni de allá," or "I'm from neither here nor there," have been referring to? Whats sorts of cultural identifiers (i..e. language, clothing, etc.) did some of the interviewees feel they had to "give up"? How might this affect them? What is colorism? How did it impact some of the interviewees' life experiences? The final interviewee said, "You're the best person to be a connector of both, because in you is everything." What might she have been saying with this statement?
- Segue into asking students to think about some of the ways the perspectives in the video were different and in what ways the stories were similar? Did anything surprise and/or inspire them?
- Again, consider having a final reflection or distribute "exit slips" for students to process their ideas and feelings.

PART 3: LATINX AMERICAN LITERARY VOICES: THEMES ACROSS POETRY

BACKGROUND

- In an effort to provide students with literary "Latinx" voices, we have suggested an array of poems for students to read through. While we recognize that racial/ethnic categories are limiting and cannot truly represent all people, especially in regard to intersectionality, we have included the voices of those who self-identify as Latinx, or Latino and Latina, or Hispanic American, so students do not create a "single story" of Latinx Americans. In this collection are ideas that encompass both struggle and resistance, the beauty of the natural world, themes of family and love, etc. While we aim to provide both windows and mirrors with these voices, they are not all-encompassing, rather a beginning. As always, we recommend that a teacher pre-reads and pre-screens all suggested material to ensure they are appropriate for their classroom.

OPENING

- In the second part of this lesson, we watched a video of self-identified Latinx Americans speak about their life experiences. Today, we are going to explore literary, or written, voices by reading through a collection of poems by self-identified Latinx and/or Latina/Latino authors.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Either independently, with a partner, or in small groups, students will read through the suggested collection of poems (listed in the Materials Part 3 Section). Consider reviewing literary and/or poetic devices with students, such as repetition, alliteration, metaphor, similes, hyperbole, personification, onomatopoeia, etc. Literary/poetic devices may be printed on a smaller handout, such as a bookmark, for students to use in this lesson and subsequent lessons.
- Ask students to read through the poems. Consider asking them to think about the following questions: Who is the speaker of the poem? What may have been the author's intent writing this poem? In other words, what messages was she or he trying to convey and/or what seems important to her/him?
- We recommend providing as much time as possible for students to read numerous poems, as a larger collection allows for more text-to-text comparisons. When the allotted time is up, gather students for a discussion.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- Ask the class: What were some of the themes you noticed? (As already mentioned, in order to provide many voices or "stories," poems have been selected to represent an array of themes, such as family, love, nature, racial injustice, resistance, longing, beauty, and pride.) What differences did you note across the poems? What similarities did you note? Highlight specific poems. For example, in "El Poema de lo Reverso" by Victor Hernández Cruz, he writes "In which everything goes backwards in time and motion... I see Columbus's three boats going backwards on the sea/ Getting smaller... Where the sailors disembark/ and go back to their towns...They become adolescents again/ become children/ infants." Why may he have employed this idea and/or powerful image of reversing time? What may Cruz be trying to accomplish? Finally, ask the students: Did your perception of the "Latinx American" experience or story change after watching the video and reading the collection of poems?
- Since the three-part lesson about Latinx American voices is closing, consider having students add to their notebooks (an idea suggested in a previous lesson) to write a final reflection, draft a poem, draw a picture, make a list of questions, jot down a list of words to describe their feelings, etc. For a prompt, ask students: For Latinx Americans, how may the past inform the present?

Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- If time allows, consider reading more fiction by Latinx American authors.
- For additional poems, consider viewing the Poetry Foundation's online collection of poems, titled, "U.S. Latinx Voices in Poetry." (Please pre-read and pre-select any poems used, as not all are suitable for a sixth grade audience.) Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144542/us-latinx-voices-in-poetry
- For a perspective on the concept of names, including bilingualism, consider reading short stories, such as "Names/Nombres," by Julia Alvarez and "My Name" a chapter from *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros.
- To learn more about current social trends in the "Latinx" or "Hispanic" community in the U.S., consider visiting the Pew Research Center's website. Available here: https://www.pewhispanic.org/

LESSON 6

ASIAN AMERICAN VOICES — THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

Grade: 6 | Suggested Time: Three Class Periods
Unit: The Historical Construction of Race and Current Racial Identities Throughout U.S. Society – The Danger of a Single Story
Related Subject(s): English/Language Arts; Social Studies/History

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that Asian Americans are are not a monolithic, racial/ethnic community.
- To understand that the term "Asian American" encompasses a diverse group of peoples and cultures that have ancestry to a landmass that typically spans the continent of Asia, including South Asia, and islands across the Pacific Ocean.
- To reject the idea of a "single story" for Asian Americans.
- To learn more about the historical events that impacted and created a shared Asian American identity, while also recognizing differences.
- To listen to self-identified Asian Americans speak about their life experiences.
- To read a collection of poems, written by self-identified Asians and/or Asian Americans, which encompasses a multitude of themes.

MATERIALS FOR PART 1

- Excerpts from *A Different Mirror for Young People* by Ronald Takaki adapted by Rebecca Stefoff. Recommended section: Chapter 8, "From China to Gold Mountain."
- For another resource, consider reading: "Asian Americans Then and Now: Linking Past to Present," article created by the Center for Global Education for the Asia Society. Available here: https://asiasociety.org/education/asian-americans-then-and-now
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 2

- "A Conversation with Asian-Americans on Race," video and brief article by Geeta Gandbhir and Michèle Stephenson for *The New York Times*. Available here: https://nyti.ms/1RZ41m7
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 3

- Consider the following poems, written by Asian and/or Asian-American authors. While we recommend these poems for a sixth grade classroom, as always, please pre-screen any and all resources before using them to ensure they are appropriate for your particular classroom:
  - "The Immigrant's Song," poem by Tishani Doshi. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/56734/the-immigrants-song
  - "Genealogy," poem by Jennifer Change. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53796/genealogy
  - "After the Dinner Party," by Adrienne Su. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/91311/after-the-dinner-party
  - "New Year," poem by Dilruba Ahmed. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55255/new-year-56d236a2e0ccf
  - "From," poem by Fatimah Asghar and Eve L. Ewing. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/91323/-582211e43f685

- "Allowance," poem by James Masao Mitsui. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/141925/allowance
- "I Eat Breakfast to Begin the Day," poem by Zubair Ahmed. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/142841/i-eat-breakfast-to-begin-the-day
- "If They Should Come For Us," poem by Fatimah Asghar. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/92374/if-they-should-come-for-us
- "In the Hospital," poem by Chen Chen. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/143239/in-the-hospital-5944115fa6ca7
- "The Dream of a Lacquer Box," poem by Kimiko Hahn. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/55546/the-dream-of-a-lacquer-box
- "Derecho Ghazal," poem by Luisa A. Igloria. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57663/derecho-ghazal
- "I Ask My Mother to Sing," poem by Li-Young Lee. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/56513/i-ask-my-mother-to-sing
- "Eating Together," poem by Li-Young Lee. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43015/eating-together-56d221af2bf26
- "Your Mother Wears a House Dress," poem by Joseph O. Legaspi. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/91304/your-mother-wears-a-house-dress
- "The Breath-Holding Contest," poem by Rick Noguchi. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/141931/the-breath-holding-contest
- "Deliberate," poem by Amy Uyematsu. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46571/deliberate
- "Family Dinner," poem by Priscilla Lee. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/56869/family-dinner
- "Returning to Earth," poem by Mari L'esperance. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/143673/returning-to-earth
- "The Bait," poem by Eric Chock. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57756/the-bait-58920f508a1d8
- "Toy Boat, poem by Ocean Vuong. Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/88733/toy-boat

- Note-taking supplies for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- This lesson, and subsequent lessons, will be divided into three parts. The first part will unpack the historical construction and treatment of a particular racial/ethnic group in the United States, specifically detailing the persecution of Asians and/or Asian Americans. To highlight efforts of resistance and underscore a shared humanity, the second part of the lesson will feature modern voices of people who identify as Asian American. In the suggested video, self-identified Asian Americans speak to their varied life experiences in relation to their racial/ethnic identity. The third, and final, part of the lesson explores literary voices, specifically poems, written by authors who self-identify as Asian and/or Asian American. Poems have been selected to represent an array of themes, such as family, love, nature, racial injustice, resistance, longing, beauty, and pride. The goal is for all three parts of the lesson to ultimately create a dynamic story, where history informs the present, and students walk away with more than a "single story" of Asian Americans living in the United States.

VOCABULARY

- Consider reviewing the following terms and/or ideas for this lesson: epithet, pernicious, scapegoat, etc.

Lesson Procedure

PART 1: THE HISTORICAL TREATMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

BACKGROUND

- In order for students to better understand the social construction of race, the first portion of this lesson is devoted to providing a brief overview of the treatment of Asians and/or Asian Americans throughout U.S. history. For a general timeline and summary of events, we've utilized Ronald Takaki's text, *A Different Mirror for Young People*, as a primary guide, as well as other sources. This lesson mostly focuses on the experiences of Chinese Americans, and briefly touches upon people who came from the Pacific Islands, South Asia and East Asia.

OPENING

- Remind students of Chimamanda Adichie's idea of the "danger of a single story." Today, we are going to borrow this idea, as we explore "Asian American" voices. Remind students that there is no single Asian and/or Asian American story. Just as with any racial or ethnic group, there is no monolithic experience to being Asian American. While there may be a "shared" experience depending on the historical context of time and place, there is no identical experience, or single story.
- In order to better understand the current social realities and diverse life experiences that exist for people who identify as Asian American today, we need to understand historical events and the historical construction and treatment of a "pan-Asian" racial identity throughout U.S. society.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Because there are hundreds of years of history to summarize, there are different ways to present the historical information to students. For example, students may complete the recommended reading the night, or a few nights, before. (Recommended reading is listed in the Materials Part 1 Section.) The teacher may also choose to conduct a group reading and discussion of the material in class, such as by reading the opening pages together and completing the rest during independent reading time, followed by a closing discussion. Additionally, teachers may consider reading from and/or providing students with handouts of the pertinent historical information (which has been included below). We've also included guiding questions to consider, to help promote classroom dialogue about these both challenging and necessary topics of history and race.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After presenting students with the recommended historical information and resources, have a class discussion.
- Consider the following questions: Who were some of the first Asian immigrants to arrive in the U.S., after European colonization? What were some of the "push and pull" factors that increased Chinese immigration to the U.S.? Why were mostly young men from China recruited to work on the railroad, as well as other laborious industries in the mid-1800s? What is the significance of "Gam Saan"? Were Chinese immigrants allowed to become U.S. citizens? Why not? What is the significance of the slogan "California for Americans?" Who said it? Who did it discriminate against? How does this type of language promote racist ideology? How did Chinese immigrants resist discrimination? How did Chinese immigrants contribute to the growth of U.S. industries? What kinds of skills did they have and/or bring with them? How did bouts of economic depression feed into racist fervor? How did the U.S. government and laws uphold a racist, or anti-Chinese, sentiment? How did Chinese immigrants fight back? Over time, how did Chinese American communities grow? What was the impact of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965? As a result, how did the pan-Asian American continue to diversify?
- Consider asking students to write a reflection in response to an assigned prompt, perhaps based on one of the questions above (the teacher may assign a particular question, or allow students to choose from a list). Also, as discussions could trigger various feelings and/or emotional responses, consider providing "exit slips" for students to write down ideas, thoughts, feelings, or questions they may have. If they are okay with it, collect their exit slips to inform upcoming discussions.

ESSENTIAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS:

- **Asian Immigration Before 1850:**
  Tens of thousands of years ago, during an ice age, it is commonly believed that people from the Asian continent crossed the Bering Strait, becoming the first humans to occupy the landmass of the Americas. As ocean levels rose, the land bridge was no longer available, erasing this footpath for Asian migrants. For thousands of years, these people populated the Americas, and are considered to be the Indigenous, or Native, population of the Americas. It is commonly believed that no groups from Asia arrived again, until a small group of Filipinos, referred to as the "Luzonians," arrived on the coast of California in 1587. Nearly two hundred years later, in 1763, another group of Filipino sailors arrived, establishing a settlement near New Orleans, Louisiana. Additionally, mostly for "trade" purposes, in the late 1700s and early 1800s, a small population of South Asian (Indian) and East Asian (Chinese) immigrants resided in the United States. However, it wasn't until the 1850s that a "wave" of Asian immigrants arrived in the U.S. Most of the early immigrants were Chinese, thus, most of the timeline reflects the experience of this ethnic/racial group. As information is presented in a mostly chronological order, other Asian immigrants are profiled near the end of the timeline. Additionally, while there is great diversity across the large continent of Asia, when immigrating to the U.S., Asian nationalities have often been grouped together. The Center for Global Education explains this idea: "Throughout their history, Asian Americans have confronted a long legacy of exclusion and inequity in relation to school policies and practices, particularly during periods of changing demographics, economic recession, or war. In spite of historic, linguistic differences, distinct Asian nationalities have been grouped together and treated similarly in schools and in the larger society. The grouping of Asian Americans together, then, makes sense in light of historic links from the past to the present."

- **Asian Immigration in the Mid-1800s:**
  In 1848, California was annexed to the U.S., officially becoming a "non slavery" state in 1850. At this time, Aaron Palmer, a policymaker for California, wrote to Congress, predicting that San Francisco would become a "booming hub of commerce" and needed a larger labor force. According to historian Ronald Takaki, "Palmer recommended that the United States import Chinese workers to build the transcontinental railroad and to farm the fertile lands of California." As a result, young men from southern China were "recruited" as laborers to work taxing jobs, such as building the infrastructure of California and other parts of the U.S. The impact of their labor and dedication was noteworthy, as the The Center for Global Education states: "Beginning in the 1850s when young single men were recruited as contract laborers from Southern China, Asian immigrants have played a vital role in the development of this country. Working as miners, railroad builders, farmers, factory workers, and fishermen, the Chinese represented 20 percent of California's labor force by 1870, even though they constituted only .002 percent of the entire United States population." It's important to note that not all Chinese immigrants came to the U.S. for the same reason. According to Takaki, some Chinese immigrants left China to escape "war, rebellion, high taxes, floods, and famine." In addition to job opportunities, others came to the California in search of gold, a place they called "Gam Saan" or Gold Mountain. By 1870, there were 63,000 Chinese immigrants, mostly men, living in the U.S. While they lived in many parts of the U.S., the majority lived in California, followed by Idaho and Montana. Half of the immigrants who arrived stayed in the U.S., but they were barred from becoming U.S. citizens, as the 1790 Naturalization Act granted citizenship to only "White" immigrants.

- **The Contributions of Chinese Immigrants:**
  Even though Chinese immigrants comprised such a small margin of the population in the mid to late-1800s, anti-Chinese sentiment brewed among the White working class. For example, the existence of Chinese miners angered White miners of California who were panning for gold. Laws were passed to favor and give advantage to such White miners, as Takaki explains: "At first California seemed to welcome the Chinese, but as their numbers increased, the political tide began to turn against them. From the goldfields came the cry, 'California for Americans!' In 1852, the California legislature answered that cry by passing another miner's tax. Every foreign miner who did not intend to become a U.S. citizen had to pay three dollars a month, which was a significant amount at the time. The tax was aimed primarily at Chinese miners, who were prevented by law from becoming citizens. They were trapped in a state of being foreigners forever." Despite racial discrimination, some Chinese miners formed independent small mining companies. According to Takaki, "By 1870, California had collected a total of five million tax dollars from the Chinese immigrants — between a quarter and half of the state's entire income." As profits in gold waned, many Chinese immigrants joined the railroad industry. Constructing the transcontinental railroad was dangerous, taxing work that required workers

to lay tracks, operate heavy drills, handle explosives, and live and work in tunnels. Yet, Chinese workers were paid smaller wages than White workers. Feuds brewed as Chinese workers demanded equal rights and White workers complained about having to work with Chinese laborers, as Takaki writes: "When the White laborers demanded that Central Pacific stop hiring the Chinese, superintendent Charles Crocker told them that if they could not get along with the Chinese, he would have only one alternative: to fire the Whites and hire more Chinese. When the Chinese workers went on strike and asked for the same wages as Whites, Crocker isolated the strikers in the mountains and cut off their food supply. After a week the starving workers were back on the job." In addition to the railroad industry, many Chinese immigrants also worked in the agricultural sector, working on "White-owned land." According to Takaki, "These workers had been experienced farmers in China. They shared their knowledge, teaching their employers how to plant, cultivate, and harvest the crops of orchards and fields. They also shared their skills and techniques in building dams and irrigation systems, turning swamplands into fertile fields. By 1880 more than two-thirds of the farm workers in Sacramento, Solano, and Yuba counties were Chinese."

- **Racial Discrimination, the Rise of Anti-Chinese Sentiment, and Chinese Resistance:**
  The more successful Chinese workers were the more White workers protested. Takaki writes: "Those protests soon became violent. Economic depression led to brutal anti-Chinese riots by unemployed White workers throughout California. Immigrants from China were beaten, shot, and loaded onto trains and shipped out of town." As Chinese immigrants increasingly became targets of racial hatred and violence, many left the factories and fields to start their own businesses, such as restaurants and laundry services. These new business ventures, however, did not allow Chinese people to escape racial hatred. Chinese people, like Native Americans and Black Americans, were targeted, as Takaki describes: "Not all Americans were comfortable with the idea of a large, permanent class of Chinese laborers. Many of the negative ideas and images that had been associated with African Americans and Native Americans were applied to the Chinese too. The Chinese were called savage, childlike, immoral, and pagan. All three groups shared a common identity: they were people of color." The government and laws upheld this racist sentiment. In 1854, the California state supreme court ruled that Chinese and "other people not White" could not provide evidence in court. The state also passed a law that banned interracial marriage. As the The Center for Global Education writes: "With the depression of 1876, amidst cries of 'They're taking away our jobs!,' anti-Chinese legislation and violence raged throughout the West Coast." The president in 1879, Rutherford B. Hayes, warned the country of the "Chinese problem." Takaki shares Hayes' words: "'Our experience in dealing with the weaker races — the Negroes and Indians — is not encouraging. I would consider with favor any suitable measures to discourage the Chinese from coming to our shores.'" White support for a racial exclusion increased, and in 1882, the U.S. government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first act which prevented immigration and naturalization on the basis of race, or country of origin. The was was renewed in 1892, again in 1902, and was extended "indefinitely into the future." The legal exclusion of Chinese immigrants lasted for sixty years. According to the Center for Global Education, "The 'Chinese Must Go' movement was so strong that Chinese immigration to the United States declined from 39,500 in 1882 to only 10 in 1887." Partially, in an effort to thwart interracial marriage across the country, Congress passed the Expatriation Act in 1907, which stripped U.S. women of their citizenship status if they married any "foreigners," such as Chinese men. Facing racial discrimination, many Chinese people fought for their rights in courts. Takaki writes, "Time and time again they took their struggle for civil rights to the courts. Although the Chinese failed to gain the right to citizenship, Chinese merchants succeeded in winning some protections under the 1870 Civil Rights Act, which guaranteed people of color the same rights as White people to make contracts, give evidence, and be protected by law." Even with some laws on their side, violence continued to be a palpable threat. On another note, because exclusion laws barred the immigration of further laborers, and women, Chinese men outnumbered women in U.S. society. As a result, bachelors formed their own "Chinatowns," in cities like San Francisco. They created organizations, established temples, formed businesses that allowed them to send mail and even "their dead" back to their homeland. Despite living in a society ripe with racial discrimination, Chinese immigrants created their own sense of community and opportunity in the U.S.

- **The Chinese Community of the U.S. Grows:**
  Before 1900, only one out of twenty Chinese immigrants was female. Between 1910 and 1924, about one in four Chinese immigrants was female. Some of this increase was due to an earthquake in San Francisco, which destroyed immigration records. In the absence of these papers, more Chinese immigrants could claim that they had been born in the U.S., which meant they could "bring" their wife and/or children from China to live

with them in the U.S. Many of these immigrants entered the U.S. through Angel Island. While Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans lived across the U.S., the majority lived in New York and San Francisco. In 1900, only 11 percent of Chinese people in the U.S. were born in the U.S. However, by 1940, more than fifty percent were born in the U.S. Many of this new generation of Chinese Americans felt "caught in between two worlds." Takaki describes this experience: "For the second-generation Chinese Americans, education was viewed as a way to advance in society. Yet at home, two cultures sometimes clashed. Young people simply wanted more independence and more choice for themselves than their traditional parents allowed. Many youngsters experienced painfully torn feelings, pulled by their ethnic identity and by their desire to fit into the larger American society." This sentiment is shared by many second-generation children across racial lines.

- **Other Groups Immigrate from Asia:**
  With the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, other groups arrived from other countries in Asia. As the Center for Global Education writes: "By 1885, following the Chinese Exclusion Act, large numbers of young Japanese laborers, together with smaller numbers of Koreans and Indians, began arriving on the West Coast where they replaced the Chinese as cheap labor in building railroads, farming, and fishing." Following the pattern of racial discrimination toward the Chinese, anti-Japanese sentiment grew and violence erupted. The school board in San Francisco demanded racially segregated schools. To quell matters, the U.S. and Japanese created the "Gentleman's Agreement" in 1907, which limited Japanese immigrants to small numbers of "businessmen." Similarly, racist sentiment limited the numbers of immigrants who came from South Asia. These laborers, a few thousand Sikh immigrants, had been initially recruited by a railroad company and made their way to California to work in the agricultural fields. The Center for Global Education describes the sequence of events, "Later, many migrated into the Pacific Northwest and California, and became farm laborers. Erroneously described as a "Hindu invasion" by exclusionists and White laborers, immigration from South Asia was outlawed in 1917 when Congress declared that India was part of the Pacific-Barred Zone of excluded Asian countries. Throughout the early and mid-1900s, the numbers of Asian immigrants remained relatively low. The passing of The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, however, allowed for more immigration from Asia. According to the Center for Global Education, "For the first time in United States history, large numbers of Asians were able to come to the United States as families. In addition, due to the United States' eagerness for technology during the Cold War, foreign engineers and scientists were also encouraged to emigrate to the United States. The dramatic changes in the Asian Pacific American landscape during the past twenty years, particularly with the explosive growth of new Filipino, Korean, South Asian Indian, and Chinese populations have resulted from the liberalization of immigration laws in 1965." In the following decade, more immigrants arrived from Southeast Asia, including refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Currently, often alongside "multiracial" people, Asian Americans are considered to be the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in the U.S.

PART 2: ASIAN AMERICAN VOICES: THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

BACKGROUND

- The second part of this lesson focuses on the diverse and shared life experiences of people who identify as Asian American.

OPENING

- Today, we are going to learn more about current social realities of what it may be like to identity as Asian and/or Asian American in the U.S.
- Before we watch the video, let's first consider the intersection of immigration and race. Ask the class: Do you think race is constructed the same way in different countries? What may be unique about the social construction of race in the U.S.? Historically, countries from Asia were denied the ability to immigrate to and become citizens of the U.S. How may this have shaped the current construction of a pan-Asian American identity?

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Show the video, "A Conversation with Asian-Americans on Race." Please note that racial epithets are used in this video. As always, please pre-screen to assess if it is appropriate for your particular classroom. Also, please advise students ahead of time to view the film with the utmost maturity and respect.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After viewing, consider the following to help guide a discussion: What is the "model minority myth"? How might this myth perpetuate stereotypes, discrimination, and racism? What is colorism? How might this idea affect people's beliefs about themselves and others? Think about the last interviewee to speak in the film. What is the significance of her statement: "When the tide rises, all boats rise"? What may she have meant with this statement? What are some of the thoughts and emotions you are experiencing as you think about this idea?
- Segue into asking students to think about some of the ways the perspectives in the video were different and in what ways the stories were similar? Did anything surprise and/or inspire you?
- Again, consider having a final reflection or distribute "exit slips" for students to process their ideas and feelings.

PART 3: ASIAN AMERICAN LITERARY VOICES: THEMES ACROSS POETRY

BACKGROUND

- In an effort to provide students with literary "Asian American" voices, we have suggested an array of poems for students to read through. While we recognize that racial/ethnic categories are limiting and cannot truly represent all people, especially with regard to intersectionality, we have included the voices of those who self-identify as Asian and/or Asian American, so students do not create a "single story" of Asian Americans. In this collection are ideas that encompass both struggle and resistance, the beauty of the natural world, themes of family and love, etc. While we aim to provide both windows and mirrors with these voices, they are not all-encompassing, rather a beginning. As always, we recommend that a teacher pre-reads and pre-screens all suggested materials to ensure they are appropriate for their classroom.

OPENING

- In the second part of this lesson, we watched a video of self-identified Asian Americans speak about their life experiences. Today, we are going to explore literary, or written, voices by reading through a collection of poems by self-identified Asian American authors.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Either independently, with a partner, or in small groups, students will read through the suggested collection of poems (listed in the Materials Part 3 Section). Consider reviewing literary and/or poetic devices with students, such as repetition, alliteration, metaphor, similes, hyperbole, personification, onomatopoeia, etc. Literary/poetic devices may be printed on a smaller handout, such as a bookmark, for students to use in this lesson and subsequent lessons.
- Ask students to read through the poems. Consider asking them to think about the following questions: Who is the speaker of the poem? What may have been the author's intent writing this poem? In other words, what messages was she or he trying to convey and/or what seems important to her/him?
- We recommend providing as much time as possible for students to read numerous poems, as a larger collection allows for more text-to-text comparisons. When the allotted time is up, gather students for a discussion.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- Ask the class: What were some of the themes you noticed? (As already mentioned, in order to provide many voices or "stories," poems have been selected to represent an array of themes, such as family, love, nature, racial injustice, resistance, longing, beauty, and pride.) What differences did you note across the poems? What similarities did you note? Highlight specific poems. For example, in "The Immigrant's Song," by Tishani Doshi, she writes "Let us not speak of those days/ when coffee beans filled the morning/ with hope, when our mothers' headscarves/ hung like White flags on washing lines... If you keep still/ and do not speak, you might hear/ your whole life fill the world/ until the wind is the only word." What may the wind symbolize or represent to Doshi? How may the speaker of the poem view immigration and/or assimilation? Finally, ask the students: Did your perception of the "Asian American" experience or story change after watching the video and reading the collection of poems?
- Since the three-part lesson about Asian American voices is closing, consider having students add to their notebooks (an idea suggested in a previous lesson), to write a final reflection, draft a poem, draw a picture, make a list of questions, jot down a list of words to describe their feelings, etc. For a prompt, ask students: For Asian Americans, how may the past inform the present?

Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- If time allows, consider reading more fiction by Asian and/or Asian American authors.
- For additional poems, consider viewing the Poetry Foundation's online collection of poems, titled, "Asian American Voices in Poetry." (Please pre-read and pre-select any poems used, as not all are suitable for a sixth grade audience.) Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101589/asian-american-voices-in-poetry
- For another perspective on the contributions of Chinese immigrants, consider reading: "Recovering an Erased History: The Chinese Railroad Workers Who Helped Connect the Country," article by Chris Fuchs for NBC News. Available here: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/recovering-erased-history-chinese-railroad-workers-who-helped-connect-country-n991136
- To learn more about current social trends in the Asian American community in the U.S., consider visiting the Pew Research Center's website. Available here: https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/asian-americans/

LESSON 7

"OTHER" AMERICAN VOICES — MULTIRACIAL PEOPLE AND FINDING OURSELVES IN THE "OTHER"

Grade: 6 | Suggested Time: Three Class Periods
Unit: The Historical Construction of Race and Current Racial Identities Throughout U.S. Society – The Danger of a Single Story
Related Subject(s): English/Language Arts; Social Studies/History

Background

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that for much of U.S. history, interracial marriage was banned.
- To understand that being multiracial is a dynamic, fluid experience for many people.
- To understand that the term "multiracial" encompasses a diverse group of peoples and cultures, a range that spans across most and/or all races/ethnicities.
- To reject the idea of a "single story" for multiracial people.
- To listen to self-identified multiracial people speak about their life experiences.
- To find ways to connect with "the other" and/or others.

MATERIALS FOR PART 1

- "Multiracial American Voices," video series created by Pew Research Center. Video 1: "Multiracial Voices on Identity," Video 2: "Multiracial Voices on Being Multiracial," Video 3: "Multiracial Voices on the Question, 'What Are You?,'" and Video 4: "Multiracial Voices on the Future." Available here: https://www.pewresearch.org/multiracial-voices/
- To better understand the U.S. government's current definitions of "race," visit "Race," an information page provided by the U.S. Census. Available here: https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 2

- *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*, photographic book by Kip Fulbeck.
- Note-taking supplies for students.

MATERIALS FOR PART 3

- For additional teacher guidance on how to facilitate a discussion centered on race, consider reading: "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," article and facilitation guide by Peggy McIntosh. Available here: https://nationalseedproject.org/images/documents/Knapsack_plus_Notes-Peggy_McIntosh.pdf

ESSENTIAL IDEA

- Somewhat similar to the previous lessons, this lesson will be divided into three parts. However, what makes this lesson different is that its focus is on multiracial identity, an identity that spans most, if not all, racial identities. Following a different order, the first part of this lesson will feature modern voices of people who identify as "multiracial." In the suggested videos, self-identified multiracial people speak to their varied life experiences in relation to their racial/ethnic identity, which often fluctuates throughout their lifetime and even throughout their daily interactions. The second part of the lesson centers around a photographic journey, or view, into the Hapa community. The third, and final, part of the lesson encourages students to question the ways we often view race, such as the "us vs. them" mentality, or the creation of "the other."

Because of this, we ask students to find ways to connect with "the other." By connecting with those who are constructed to be different, or having "opposing" identities, we allow ourselves the opportunity to celebrate these differences and begin to underscore our inherent similarities as humans.

VOCABULARY

- Consider reviewing the following terms and/or ideas for this lesson: multiracial, normalize, status quo, hapa, intersectionality, etc.

Lesson Procedure

PART 1: "OTHER" AMERICANS IN THE U.S.

BACKGROUND

- Sometimes, such as when filling out forms, multiracial people are considered an "other" racial group. Other times, multiracial people may feel pressured to choose one racial identity over the other. Given this context, what does it mean to be multiracial today?

OPENING

- For the past five lessons, we have listened to voices of people from different racial groups. While some of the voices have touched upon the idea of having more than one racial identity, today we are going to learn more about people who specifically identify as multiracial.
- For much of U.S. history, there was a ban on interracial marriage, specifically banning White Americans from marrying a person of color. As a result, depending on time and region, multiracial people may be viewed differently. For example, with the "one-drop" rule of Blackness, someone with any measurable amount of Black "blood," or sub-Saharan ancestry, would be considered Black in U.S. society. On the other hand, someone needs to embody a certain "blood quantum," or specific "amount" of Native ancestry, to be considered a member of a particular tribe, usually ranging from having half of their ancestry being "Native" to a fraction as small as one-sixteenth. With the Loving vs. Virginia case of 1967, the Supreme Court struck down all state laws barring interracial marriage. Additionally, the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 opened the doors to immigrants from other parts of the world, such as Asia and Africa. As a result, there has been an increase in interracial relationships and multiracial children. As already suggested, how these children and adults of interracial unions identify fluctuates.
- Before we watch the video, let's first consider the topic of race. Ask the class: What does multiracial mean?

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Show the videos from the "Multiracial American Voices," series created by Pew Research Center. Video 1: "Multiracial Voices on Identity," Video 2: "Multiracial Voices on Being Multiracial," Video 3: "Multiracial Voices on the Question, 'What Are You?,'" and Video 4: "Multiracial Voices on the Future."
- As always, please advise students ahead of time to view the film with the utmost maturity and respect.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- After viewing, consider the following questions to help guide a discussion: In the first video, one of the interviewees said, "Conversations about race can get uncomfortable?" What may he have meant with that statement? How does he "prove his Indianness" to people? How did one of the interviewees change their racial identity over time? Why did one of the interviewees say it's "easier" to identify as White? One of the interviewees said it's "impossible to separate one part of your identity from" other parts. What did he mean by that? How does this relate to the idea of intersectionality? What were some of the mentioned advantages of being multiracial? What is a common bond for many multiracial people? What may "what are you" really mean? What "different space" do some multiracial people occupy? In what ways is a multiracial identity becoming "normalized"?
- Segue into asking students to think about some of the ways the perspectives in the video were different and in what ways the stories were similar.
- Ask students to respond, either through dialogue or writing, to the following prompt: How may multiracial identities disrupt and challenge the status quo of race?

PART 2: "OTHER" AMERICAN VOICES: THEMES ACROSS "HAPA" IDENTITY

BACKGROUND

- In an effort to provide students with literary voices of those who identify as multiracial, we suggest reading Part Asian, 100% Hapa. In this collection, photographs are presented with words to describe how people of part-Asian descent describe themselves. As always, we recommend that a teacher pre-screens all suggested material to ensure it is appropriate for their classroom.

OPENING

- In the previous lesson, we watched videos of self-identified Multiracial Americans speak about their life experiences. Today, we are going to explore ways in which multiracial people identify, such as those who align themselves with the "Hapa" community. As defined in the text, the term "hapa," is someone of "mixed racial heritage with partial roots in Asia and/or Pacific Islander ancestry."

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Either independently, with a partner, or in small groups, students will read through the book *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*.
- Ask students to consider the following questions: How are people identifying? Beyond race, what other categories are used? What are some of the similarities between the statements? What are some of the differences?

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- Ask the class: What were some of the themes you noticed? What differences did you note across the entries? What similarities did you note? Did anything surprise you or resonate with you? Did your perception of the "Multiracial American" experience or story change after watching the video and/or reading the book?

PART 3: FINDING OURSELVES IN THE "OTHER"

BACKGROUND

- At this point, students have heard the perspectives of various racial groups in the U.S. Before they tell the story of their own identity (in the final lesson), they should first find ways to connect to the "other" and/or others.

OPENING

- Tell the class that this lesson will center on finding ways to identify with the "other"? What do you think that idea suggests? Explain that society often frames race as an "us vs. them" concept. This idea creates a category or group that we sometimes label or conceptualize as the "other." Because of this, we're going to find ways to connect with, or find similarities to the experiences of, other people. By connecting with those who are constructed to be different, or having "opposing" identities, we allow ourselves the opportunity to celebrate these differences and begin to underscore our inherent similarities as humans.

CLASS ACTIVITY

- Students should review key ideas from other lessons. Ask the class: Given all the voices you've heard and histories you've read, what stories have you identified with? Why do you think that is? Now, what stories did you have more trouble connecting with? Why? Pick one of the stories you initially had trouble connecting with. Rewatch or reread the material to find something that you have in common with that person's life experience.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

- In a "wraparound" or "serial testimony" fashion, students may share their ideas. For "democratic" purposes, give every student the same amount of time, such as one minute. (For guidance on how to best conduct this conversation, review Peggy McIntosh's article, referenced in the Materials Part 3 Section). As Peggy McIntosh notes, students should speak from experience, not from opinion.
- When students are done sharing, ask additional questions. For example, just as there is a "danger" to a single story, is there a danger to overemphasizing ideas that create an identity that is centered on the "other"? How may this viewpoint cloud our views? How may it open, or stimulate, our thinking? In regard to race, or another social identity, have you ever felt like an "other'? Were there advantages to being the "other"? Were there disadvantages? Why may it be important to talk about race? How may thinking about intersectionality expand our views? Why may it be important to celebrate differences and recognize similarities?

Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- If time allows, consider reading more fiction by "Other" American authors, such as people who identify as multiracial, non-Christian, LGBTQ+, etc.
- For poems written by the LGBTQ+ community, consider viewing the Poetry Foundation's online collection of poems, titled, "LGBTQ Pride Poems." (Please pre-read and pre-select any poems used, as not all are suitable for a sixth grade audience.) Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144686/lgbtq-pride-poems
- For poems written by the Muslim community and those who identify with Islamic culture, consider viewing the Poetry Foundation's online collection of poems, titled, "Poems of Muslim Faith and Islamic Culture." (Please pre-read and pre-select any poems used, as not all are suitable for a sixth grade audience.) Available here: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/144559/poems-of-muslim-faith-and-islamic-culture
- To learn more about the exploration of a new racial/ethnic category, consider reading: "Census Bureau Explores New Middle East/North Africa Ethnic Category," by Pew Research Center. Available here: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/03/24/census-bureau-explores-new-middle-eastnorth-africa-ethnic-category/

LESSON 8
THE STORY OF OUR OWN IDENTITIES

Grade: 6 | Suggested Time: 45+ minutes (time needed for writing)
Unit: The Historical Construction of Race and Current Racial Identities Throughout U.S. Society – The Danger of a Single Story
Related Subject(s): English/Language Arts; Writing/Personal Essay

Background

OBJECTIVES
- To explore their own identity, while considering race/ethnicity, as well as gender, sex, sexual orientation sexuality, religion, age, socioeconomic status, language, etc.
- To create a story of their own, one that is representative of their identity, or multiplicities of identity.

MATERIALS
- "America, Say My Name," article by Viet Thanh Nguyen for *The New York Times*. Available here: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/09/opinion/sunday/immigrants-refugees-names-nguyen.html
- Consider viewing: "#SeeMe Campaign," video created to promote the Stomp Out Bullying Campaign. Available here: https://www.stompoutbullying.org/campaigns/see-me-campaign
- Note-taking supplies for students.

ESSENTIAL IDEA
- After listening to and learning about other people's experiences mostly based on their racial identity, students will write about their own identity and life experiences. In addition to their racial and/or ethnic identity, students will be encouraged to think and write about other aspects of their identity, considering the intersectionality of who they are. The core question of the lesson asks: Who am I? What makes me "me"? What is the story I want to tell?

VOCABULARY
- Consider reviewing or revisiting the following terms and/or ideas for this lesson: identity, intersectionality.

Lesson Procedure

BACKGROUND
- As a culminating activity, students will think about who they are, or the various parts of themselves that create their "identity." For guidance, they will read "America, Say My Name," a compelling personal essay crafted by novelist and opinion writer Viet Thanh Nguyen. Born in Vietnam, Viet moved to the United States when he was four years old. His parents, having already changed their birth names, to what they thought were more "American" names, asked Viet if he wanted to do the same. Throughout his childhood he tried different names, but nothing felt right. Finally, he decided that his birth name was the only name he wanted, and the world, and those living in the United States, could learn to say it. Viet argues that a myriad of names, including Viet and Nguyen are "all American names, if we want them to be." In fact, "all of [these names are] a reminder that we change these United States of America one name at a time." Thinking of these ideas, and considering the multitude of perspectives students have read about and analyzed for the last seven lessons, students will think of and write about their own identity.

OPENING

- Remind students of Chimamanda Adichie's idea of the "danger of a single story." Today, we are going to borrow this idea, as we explore our own voices. Remind students about all of the ideas and histories they've explored thus far. What were some of the ideas that stood out to them? Did anything surprise and/or inspire them? What ideas will they hold on to? Tell them that their task today is to think of their own story.

GUIDED PRACTICE

- For guidance, tell students we will read "America, Say My Name," a compelling personal essay crafted by novelist and opinion writer Viet Thanh Nguyen. (Information about the author and essay is shared in the Background Section of the lesson).
- Either as a class, independently, or in small groups, read the essay. Have students highlight or annotate ideas that resonated with them.
- When they're done reading, share dialogue as a class. Ask students questions about the theme(s) of the article. For example, What is an American name? (An American name can be anything.) Who gets the "name," or label, "American"? (The author asserts that an "American" can mean anyone from North, Central, or South America.) Referencing the text, why was it important that the author kept his birth name?
- Segue into having the class think about their own identity. Ask: If you had to write about something that mattered to you, what would it be? What are parts of your identity that you care about? What do you want others to know about you?
- Ask the class to take out the identity charts they made during the first lesson. Ask: Now that we've unpacked centuries of history, listened to others speak about their life experiences, and read literary voices, is there anything more you can add to your identity charts?
- Encourage students to think about intersectionality, such as considering their race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality or sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, beliefs and/or traditional (i.e. religious identities, if they have them), nationality, ability, etc. Ask them to consider cultural elements that may not have readily available labels, such as languages they speak, the foods they eat, their names, etc.

INDEPENDENT AND/OR GROUP WORK

- Tell students that their task today (and perhaps over the next few class periods) is to write their own story. This can be in the form of a racial, ethnic and/or cultural autobiography, where they primarily focus on their racial identity. They may also incorporate other aspects of their identities, such as gender, religion, language, etc. They may include stories about their families, the foods they eat, the music they listen to, their goals and dreams. In short, they should focus on what's important to them. They may ask themselves: Who am I? What makes me "me"? What is the story I want to tell?
- Consider allowing students to present their work using different learning modalities, such as by writing a personal essay, crafting poetry, writing songs, etc.
- If students need more guidance, encourage them to revisit the notes they've made throughout the unit, rewatch some of the recommended videos, reread some of the poetry, etc.

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

- In a following class period, students should read and/or present their work.
- Encourage students to applaud after each student shares their story.

Extension Activities

SUGGESTIONS

- If students are comfortable sharing their stories with a larger audience, consider asking each student to submit a piece of writing that encapsulates their "story." They may do so anonymously, or with their name on it. The teacher may create an online or printed anthology. For a voice component, students may make audio recordings of their stories, which they may publish on a password-protected blog or school website.